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THE WORKS OF
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

EDITED BY
CHARLES WELSH

VOLUME X

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The Divine Comedy

OF

Dante Alighieri

VOLUME IV.

Translated by

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Illustrated

VOLUME X.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The full, copious and scholarly Illustrations of Dante, his Works and his Epoch and his Contemporaries, which appeared after the voluminous notes at the end of each of the three volumes of "The Divine Comedy," as first published, are here collected in one volume as they apply generally to the whole of this great trilogy, and are better read and easier studied as an entire set of comments by the most eminent hands on the man and his work.

Prefixed to them is the Essay on Dante, written by Longfellow in 1838 and originally published in the volume of his Prose Work, entitled, "Outre-Mer."

CHARLES WELSH.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

There is little that is stirring in the life of our Great American Poet, except in so far as the contemplation of so beautiful a career, so pure a life, and so lofty a soul, will stir the depths of the feelings of all who love their fellow-men—and who rejoice in the manifestation of whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely and whatsoever things are of good report. The story of his life is writ large in his work, both in his poetry and his prose, even as the beauty of his noble character is revealed therein.

He was born at Portland, Maine, on Feb. 27, 1807, to which town his earliest American ancestor came in 1678 from Hampshire in England. His father was Stephen Longfellow, who graduated at Harvard with such distinguished men as Judge Story, Dr. Channing and others, whose names men delight to honor and which shine in the annals of our country. He practised the profession of law and achieved distinction therein. He went into politics, and became a member of the Legislature of Massachusetts, and later represented that State in Congress. A

kind, but strict father, after the manner of the time, he taught his children habits of respect, obedience, unselfishness, honor and fidelity.

His mother was Zelpha Wadsworth, the daughter of General Peleg Wadsworth, who had fought and gained wounds and honor on the battlefields of the Revolution, and a descendant of John Alden and of Priscilla the Puritan maiden. She was a lover of Music, of Poetry and of Nature; pious, kind and cheerful, and she possessed the art, rarer perhaps now than then of making herself the friend and true companion of her children. Thus Longfellow, like Bryant, Emerson, Holmes, Lowell, Whittier, and Hawthorne came of the choicest of New England stock, and it is one of the chiefest glories of New England, as one of Longfellow's biographers has well said, that "these seven men, the seven lamps of light in American literature, should all in parentage and in lineage have been indigenous to her soil."

The boy started on his school career at the early age of three and soon displayed qualities which indicated character of a high order. An apt student, industrious and persevering, he made rapid progress with his work and early manifested a love of literature. Among the books he first learned to love were "The Arabian Nights," "Don Quixote," "Ossian" and "The Sketch Book" of Washington Irving, of which last he says that he read it at the age of twelve "with

ever increasing wonder and delight, spellbound by its pleasant humor, its melancholy tendencies, its atmosphere of revery—nay, even by its gray-brown covers, the shaded letters of its titles, and the fair clear type which seemed an outward indication of its style." [1] "Nourishing a youth sublime" with such books for companions as these, and the other rich contents of his father's library, his boyhood was spent mostly in his native town which he never ceased to love, and whose beautiful surroundings, and quiet pure life, he has described in his poem, "My Lost Youth." Here he grew up in the midst of majestic peace which was once broken, and that, by an event which made a deep impression on him—the war of 1812. He never forgot

> "the sea-fight far away,
> How it thundered o'er the tide,
> And the dead captains as they lay,
> In their graves o'erlooking the tranquil bay,
> Where they in battle died."

The "tranquil Bay" is Casco Bay, one of the most beautiful in the world, studded with bold green islands, well fitted to be the Hesperides of the Poet's boyhood dreams.

He usually passed his holidays with one or the other of his grandfathers or with his uncle—Stephenson. Perhaps his favorite vacation time was with his grandfather, General Peleg Wads-

[1] See the address on Washington Irving, Vol. II, p. 403.

worth, for he was an excellent story-teller, and was full of recollections of his army days, when he was captured by the British and escaped from the fort at Castine.

One can trace the effect of all this in his later life and works and especially the effect of the books he first read, for as Thomas Bailey Aldrich has so well said, "Books read in youth leave an indelible impression. The mature reader may forget the plot and characters of last month's novel, and by chance the name of its author; but he remembers the very page and type of the old copy of 'Robinson Crusoe' and the tattered cover of 'The Arabian Nights' which he read as a boy. The period of childhood is the most sensitive and receptive period of life. In those years foreign languages are acquired with a facility afterwards lacking, and the books read exert directly or indirectly a great influence in moulding thought and character. They are often incidental factors in determining some step affecting all our future. The writer was lately told by one of our distinguished naval commanders that his career was pointed out to him by a chance reading of a biography of Paul Jones. Doubtless many a lad has been sent off to sea by the perusal of Captain Marryat's 'Midshipman Easy' or Fenimore Cooper's 'Two Admirals.' It was the sonnets of William Bowles that awakened the poetic instinct in Coleridge, as in

subsequent years it was Spencer's 'Fairie Queen' and Chapman's translation of Homer that cast a spell upon the imagination of young Keats. His love of Grecian mythology, out of which grew his noblest poem, dated from the hour he opened Chapman's English version of the Iliad. In her 'Memoirs' Madame Roland speaks of the singular fascination which 'Plutarch's Lives' exercised upon her when she was little Jeanne Philpon. 'I shall never forget,' she says, 'the Lent of 1763, at which time I was nine years of age, when I carried it ("Plutarch") to church instead of my prayer-book. To that period I may trace the impressions and ideas that rendered me a republican, though I did not then dream that I should ever become a citizen of a republic.' I fancy that old-time books have frequently an unsuspected complicity in coloring even our maturer thoughts and actions. What impulses may not occasionally be prompted in us by the perhaps half-unconscious reminiscence of some record of daring, or generosity, or self-sacrifice that moved our hearts in the days of youth!" [1]

At the early age of fourteen his first poem, "The Battle of Lovell's Pond," was printed in the "Portland Gazette," this will be found in the collection of verses entitled "Juvenilia" in the fourth volume of this edition. By the time he was fifteen he had qualified to enter Bowdoin

[1] T. B. Aldrich in "The Young Folks Library" compiled by Charles Welsh.

College at Brunswick, near the falls of the Androscoggin river, in a region full of Indian scenery and legend, and the impressions which they made upon his mind was later reflected in his work.

His college life was regular, brilliantly successful and brought forth at once practical results. He graduated in 1825, at the age of eighteen, fourth in his class, and he modestly says, "How I came to get so high up is rather a mystery to me, inasmuch as I have never been a remarkably hard student touching college studies, except during my sophomore year, when I used to think I was studying pretty hard." His choice of a theme for his commencement oration was a characteristic one; at first he thought of taking for it, the life and writings of Chatterton, the boy poet, but he finally decided on "Our Native Writers" for his subject. While at college he formed acquaintance with men whose names since became as famous as his own, one of them being Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose genius he was one of the first to recognize and publicly proclaim; others were George B. Cheever and J. S. C. Abbott. During all his college course he continued to write poetry and all of the "Juvenilia," with a great part of his first volume of collected poems, belong to this period.

After graduation he remained for a short time in Bowdoin College in the capacity of tutor, and

then entered his father's law office. But for this profession he was both by capacity and tastes utterly unfitted. His literary success,—for his poems had found ready acceptance not only in his own town, but among a wider audience; they had been published in the two leading literary publications of the day; "The American Monthly Magazine" and "The United States Literary Gazette,"—tended to foster his leaning towards a literary career. Other walks in life were suggested to, and even pressed upon him, but neither the Law, which his father favored, nor Medicine had any attraction for him—for he said, while his future career was under discussion, "I hardly think nature designed me for the bar, or the pulpit, or the dissecting-room; I cannot make a lawyer of any eminence, because I have not a talent for argument; I am not good enough for a minister; and as to Physic, I utterly and absolutely detest it. The fact is, I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature; my whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centres in it. There may be something visionary in *this,* but I flatter myself that I have prudence enough to keep my enthusiasm from defeating its own object by too great haste. Surely, there never was a better opportunity offered for the exertion of literary talent in our own country than is now offered."

To all of which his father with grave judg-

ment and wise prescience replied, "A literary life, to one who has the means of support, must be very pleasant. But there is not wealth enough in this country to afford encouragement and patronage to merely literary men. And as you have not had the fortune (I will not say whether good or ill) to be born rich, you must adopt a profession which will afford you subsistence as well as reputation. I am happy to observe that my ambition has never been to accumulate wealth for my children, but to cultivate their minds in the best possible manner, and to imbue them with correct moral, political, and religious principles—believing that a person thus educated will, with proper diligence, be certain of attaining all the wealth which is necessary to happiness."

As a sort of compromise it was decided that he should spend a year at Harvard in the study of general literature and specially of Modern Languages. But before this plan matured an opportunity for him to gratify his natural bent presented itself. The trustees of his Alma Mater decided to dispose of a foundation of one thousand dollars given by Madame Bowdoin, by creating a Chair of Modern Languages. The work he had already done in translation and his other literary efforts pointed to Longfellow as the man for the Professorship, and as related in the article on "Longfellow as a Translator," after waiting a few months for his ship, "The Cad-

mus," he sailed for Europe well armed with letters of introduction, arriving at Havre in France after a voyage of thirty days. About two years before this he had made his first visit to Boston, his farthest trip from the home of his childhood and youth, enjoying quite a round of pleasurable experiences, and as he afterwards wrote, finding himself "much pleased with the city as well as its inhabitants."

Travelling at the time Longfellow made his first journey to Europe was slow and likely to be tedious. He went by stage to Boston through Northampton to Albany and by boat down the Hudson: while waiting for his boat in New York he paid a visit to Philadelphia which he did not enjoy so much as he did his brief sojourn in New York.

From Havre he went to Paris and after a tour on foot in central France he set out for Madrid where he met Alexander Everett and the author of the book of his earliest love, Washington Irving who was there occupied in writing his "Columbus." After some time spent in Spain visiting Seville, Cadiz, Gibraltar, Malaga and Granada, he went to Italy visiting Florence and Rome where he fell seriously sick of the Roman fever. When he had recovered he went to Dresden and to Gottingen the University which has been made famous to many who would never otherwise have heard of it, by George Canning's

famous song in "The Rover" in which he tells of

> "those companions true,
> Who studied with me at the U
> —niversity of Gottingen."

Then he ran over to London where he spent a few days, returning again to Gottingen, where his friend Preble was living, by way of Holland and the Rhine. During all of these journeyings he was garnering impressions and absorbing stores of folk lore and legend which he subsequently employed in his literary creations.

Other results of this visit to Europe and of his early reading of Washington Irving are embodied in the volume of "Outre-Mer;" one of his biographers has said: "For an American, while still in a plastic state, to spend much time in Europe is a doubtful and, not unfrequently, a disastrous experiment, unfitting him for a useful, contented life in his own country. The effect of Longfellow's visit was twofold. On the one hand, it widened his sympathies, gave him confidence in himself, and supplied him with many poetical themes: on the other, it traditionalized mind, colored for him the pure light of nature and rendered him in some measure unfit to feel or express the spirit of American nature and life.[1] His sojourns in Europe fell exactly in the time when in England, the reaction against

[1] If this were so however, the effect very speedily wore off. C. W.

the sentimental atheism of Shelley, the pagan sensitivity of Keats, and the sublime, Satanic outcastness of Byron was at its height; when, in the Catholic countries the negative exaggerations of the French Revolution were inducing a counter current of positive faith, which threw men into the arms of a half-sentimental, half-æsthetic mediævalism; and when, in Germany, the aristocratic paganism of Goethe was being swept aside by that tide of dutiful, romantic patriotism which flooded the country, as soon as it began to feel that it still existed after being run over by Napoleon's war chariot. When, in 1829 he returned to assume his duties at Bowdoin College, he saw the world and man no longer in the clear effulgence of nature, but in the subdued and tinted light that comes through painted cathedral windows, or in the reflected rays that fall from somnambulous moons."

He returned home in the summer of 1829 and in September of that year entered upon his duties as professor at Bowdoin, where he remained for six years. He was only twenty-two, but even at that age he was perhaps the most accomplished scholar in America. He worked hard for his classes. He taught well. But he was methodical in all he did and by dint of that habit and of economy of time his accomplishment was remarkable. He not only wrote "Outre-Mer" but he also wrote important articles for the

"North American Review" and the "New England Magazine," occupied himself with his translations, compiling text books, etc., and altogether he was as effectively busy as a man could be. At this period of his life, however, he wrote but little original poetry. His mind for the time seems in its action to have been almost wholly receptive.

During this time in his 24th year (1831) he had married Miss Mary S. Potter one of his early loves, the beautiful daughter of Judge Barrett Potter of his native town of Portland and a friend of his father; their marriage was entirely and beautifully happy; his wife was refined, and accomplished, of congenial tastes and habits, she was the abiding joy of his studious but active life—the "Being Beauteous" of his quiet and happy home, as he called her in one of his most pathetic poems.

Thus engaged and thus domiciled, Longfellow worked happily till December, 1834. He was then offered the Smith professorship of Modern Languages and Belles Lettres at Harvard University in succession to George Ticknor. His salary was to be $1500. At Bowdoin it had been but $1000. Professors' salaries were not large in those days, but people lived simply. Harvard at any rate was the place where Longfellow felt he ought to be and he glady accepted the offer. It had been provided

also that if he chose he might first spend a year abroad. Longfellow's youthful ambition had been to be "eminent." His main desire was now to be "thorough." So he determined to avail himself of the chance of further study abroad that was now afforded him. Accordingly he left for Europe a second time, in April, 1835, accompanied by his lovely and much-loved wife.

This second visit lasted till December, 1836, and this period proved to be one of the most fateful epochs of his life. He spent a short holiday in London, where he saw a good deal of literary and artistic life, and a good deal too of the best society. He made the acquaintance of Sir John Bowring, the Lockharts, the Carlyles and many others. Longfellow's manner, bearing and appearance, supported as they were by position, scholarship and character, were ever potent "open sesame" wherever he went. Dignified, polite, courteous, accomplished in languages and literature, handsome and always well dressed he was as typical a representative of what is best in American culture as ever went abroad. His London holiday was a continual round of gayety. After his visit to Norway, Sweden and Denmark, he began a tour of Holland, but at Rotterdam his wife fell ill and on the 29th of November she died there. Longfellow's nature was deep. Its agitations rarely showed themselves upon the surface. His re-

ticence in grief was perhaps his strongest characteristic. Even with his closest friends he could not share his sorrow. But when in 1839 he gave to the world his first book of poems, one beautiful and tender lyric, that could have come only from the heart, showed how the memory of his beloved wife ever remained with him as a dear and cherished spiritual presence:

"With a slow and noiseless footstep
Comes that messenger divine,
Takes the vacant chair beside me,
Lays her gentle hand in mine.

"And she sits and gazes at me
With those deep and tender eyes,
Like the stars so still and saintlike
Looking downward from the skies."

After his bereavement he went to Heidelberg, and while there his brother-in-law George W. Pierce died, the friend

"young and strong, who cherished
Noble longings for the strife,
By the roadside fell and perished
Weary with the march of life."

There he made the acquaintance of several German scholars of renown and first met his fellow-countryman, William Cullen Bryant. In the summer he went to the Tyrol and thence to Switzerland, where he met and travelled with John L. Motley and his family. It was while sojourning in these romantic regions that he

made the acquaintance of the lady who became the heroine of his prose romance, "Hyperion" and afterwards his second wife.

On his return to America in 1836, Longfellow took up his residence in Cambridge, and began to lecture and write. In his new home he found himself amid surroundings entirely congenial to him. Indeed, there are few places in the world which a man of learning, refinement, sociability, and liberal views would rather choose for a home than Cambridge. Its spacious and free rural aspect, its old graveyards and towering elms, its great university, its cultivated society, for admission to which unabsorbed wealth is a positive disqualification, and its vicinity to humane, substantial, busy Boston, are all attractions to such a man.

Longfellow's literary work now began in earnest. His new professional duties did not tax his time and strength so heavily as they had been taxed at Bowdoin. He gave his students a good deal of himself and his lectures were full and covered wide ground. But he allowed himself time for work of his own. One of his first employments was to write for the "North American Review" a generous review of Hawthorne's "Twice-Told Tales." He had taken up his residence at the Vassall or Craigie house on Brattle Street, the headquarters of Washington when he took command of the United States

Revolutionary Army in 1776. His study was in Washington's own bed chamber, and he thus describes his manner of life while there: "I live in a great house which looks like an Italian villa; have two large rooms opening into each other. They were once General Washington's chambers. I breakfast at seven on tea and toast, and dine at five or six generally in Boston. In the evening I walk on the Common with Hilliard or alone; then go back to Cambridge on foot. If not very late I sit an hour with Felton or Sparks. For nearly two years I have not studied at night save now and then. Most of the time am alone; smoke a good deal; wear a broad-brimmed black hat, black frock coat, a black cane. Molest no one. Dine out frequently. In winter go much into Boston society. The last year have written a great deal, enough to make volumes. Have not read much. Have a number of literary plans and projects." His choice friends were: Felton, who was the professor of Greek; Sumner, who was then lecturer in the law school; and Hilliard, who was the scholar and critic. To them he used to submit for criticism his poems before he gave them to the world. The first poem thus submitted was "Flowers." The next was "The Psalm of Life." These and others were given to the world anonymously—for the most part in "The Knickerbocker Magazine." "The Psalm of Life" as soon as published was said,

recited, and sung everywhere; and it became at once a psalm of the people while his other poems were scarcely less popular. But as yet their author remained anonymous—and it was not until 1839 when he issued his "Voices of the Night" under his own name that their authorship was made publicly known.

In 1843 Longfellow married again, his second wife was Miss Frances E. Appleton of Boston, the daughter of Thomas G. Appleton, one of the founders of Lowell, Massachusetts, and a sister of Thomas G. Appleton, himself a poet of some repute whose acquaintance he had formed and whose company he had so much enjoyed, while in Switzerland some six years previously. On their wedding journey they visited the homestead of his newly married wife's maternal grandfather at Pittsfield, where stood "the old clock on the stairs" which, together with the words of the old French missionary Jacques Bridaine, inspired the poem with the famous refrain of "Never, Forever." They also passed through Springfield, where the visit to the arsenal and the remark of his wife, who compared the ranges of gunbarrels to the pipes of an organ, suggested the poem entitled "The Arsenal at Springfield," beginning,—

> "This is the Arsenal. From floor to ceiling
> Like a huge organ, rise the burnished arms;"

At the time of his second marriage the Craigie house became his own—and the quaint old building which stands in a large garden full of splendid elms continued to be his chief residence till the day of his death; Longfellow had none of the modern restlessness which seems to inspire so many of us to be ready to "pull up stakes" and find a fresh living place any-when and any-where,—he had the old-fashioned English love of home and attachment to a place. He rooted himself where he lived and loved, and he loved his home with a love that was almost pathetic.

"Once, ah, once, within these walls,
One whom memory oft recalls,
The Father of his Country dwelt.
And yonder meadows, broad and damp,
The fires of the besieging camp
Encircled with a burning belt.
Up and down these echoing stairs,
Heavy with the weight of cares,
Sounded his majestic tread;
Yes, within this very room
Sat he in those hours of gloom,
Weary both in heart and head."

Of the happy years of Longfellow's union with his second wife one of his biographers has well said:

"He was loyally true to the memory of her who had been the chosen companion of his earlier years. A poet, however, is one that ever

feels the need of direct and immediate love. Prosperous as Longfellow's life was, occupied wholly with his work and studies as he seemed to be, he was ill at ease, lonesome and unhappy. In other words, he was heartsick. For a time he seemed to find contentment in the writing of 'Hyperion,' which as we have said elsewhere, though ostensibly a romance—a novel, is in reality a transcript of the novelist's own feelings and experiences during a portion of his second tour in Europe. 'Paul Flemming' is himself. 'Mary Ashburton' was Miss Frances Appleton, the young lady whose acquaintance he had made in Switzerland. He had not intended the correspondence between the ideal and the real to be noticed. But the world discovered it, and for a time the discovery caused embarrassment. Miss Appleton was everything that the novelist's fancy had painted his heroine to be. Though beautiful in form and face, with a beauty that was regal, the beauty and nobility of her mind and character were even yet more splendid. Her fine culture of brain and heart commanded reverence from the most ordinary acquaintance. Longfellow, however, tested his heart well. He had met her as a radiant girl of 19. He waited seven years before he personally declared his love. By this time Miss Appleton had forgiven her public wooing. They were married in July, 1843. So long as she was

spared to him no happiness could be more complete than theirs."

She was his helpmeet in every sense of the word; when, on their return to Cambridge after their honeymoon, Longfellow undertook the task of editing the "Poets and Poetry of Europe" she served as his amanuensis—and as W. J. Stillman has said "there was something angelic about them both, a natural innocence and large beneficence and equanimity which in the chance and contradiction of life could rarely be found in the wedded state."

But alas! this happy and ideal union lasted for only eighteen years. In 1861 almost on the very anniversary of his marriage, his wife was burned to death before his eyes. She had been amusing her children by making impressions in sealing-wax. A lighted drop of wax, falling into her lap, had set fire to her dress, and before her husband could extinguish it the injury was mortal. She died from the shock and was buried on the anniversary of her marriage. To Longfellow the shock was almost mortal also. She was ablaze in an instant, rushed into his arms with a wild cry and never spoke afterwards and he was so severely burned himself that he was unable to attend the funeral. But he bore his grief with an almost defiant fortitude, and scarcely ever allowed an allusion to it to pass his lips; once they were unsealed when a

visitor expressed the hope that he might be enabled to "bear his cross" with patience; he exclaimed: "Bear the cross, yes: but what if one is stretched upon it?"

The lines entitled "The Cross of Snow," which never were shown during his life were found in his portfolio after his death, and they showed how patiently he bore his cross and how heavy was the burden. He wrote:—

"Such is the cross I wear upon my breast, 1
These eighteen years, through all the changing scenes
And seasons changeless since the day she died."

The death of his wife and the outbreak of the Civil War, during which his son Charles was wounded, were two events which naturally cast a gloom over the life of one who loved so deeply his wife, his home, his family and his native land. And it was long before he even partially recovered from the effects of either sufficiently to enable him to return to his work with his accustomed interest and vigor. Up to this time his middle life had been a full one in every sense of the word; full of the enjoyment of "love, honor, and troops of friends"; full, too, of all sorts of calls and demands upon his time; and full of visits to and from notable, prominent and interesting men and women;—full of formal and informal dinners, concerts, and entertainments of various kinds, and full also of those

less agreeable demands, which are made upon the time of all those who have attained a position of prominence in the public eye. But the response to these demands was always that of the courteous, kindly, noble gentleman which Longfellow ever proved himself to be. Craigie House was the Mecca of a constant and increasing stream of pilgrims from all lands and including all sorts and conditions of men and women who came to do him honor and to pay him homage and respect. So much so indeed that the Cambridge car conductors were wont to call out "Longfellow's" when they were nearing his home as they to-day call out the names of the streets or the big stores in our great cities.

Among the many distinguished and well-known visitors to Craigie House were Tom Hughes, Jas. A. Froude, Anthony Trollope, Wilkie Collins, William Black, C. Kingsley, Professor Bonamy Price, Dr. E. H. Plumptre, Dean Stanley, Lord Houghton, Lord and Lady Dufferin, the Duke of Argyll, Coquerel, Salvini, Christine Nilsson, Madame Titjens and Dom Pedro, the Emperor of Brazil. Between 1850 and 1854 all this, the routine of his professorship, and the desire to concentrate his mind more upon his literary work, began to make him think of resigning his chair at Harvard. But he did not take this final step until the last named year, quitting the position after having

occupied it for nearly a quarter of a century. Two years later, he had planned another visit to Europe, but an accident prevented him, and he spent some time in his cottage at Nahant instead. In 1857 "The Atlantic Monthly" was started, and Longfellow was one of the earliest of that galaxy of contributors which have made that magazine sparkle in our literary firmament with a brilliancy which is not likely soon to be eclipsed.

Like all men of strong mind and lofty sentiments Longfellow found "surcease from sorrow" in his life-chosen work, and after the first shock of his great grief was over, he set about his long contemplated final setting in order of his translation of Dante's Divine Comedy;—the story of the writing and the publishing of which is told elsewhere in these volumes.

But in the meantime he went in May, 1868, with a party of friends to Europe for the third and last time, visiting many historic scenes and places, such as Devonshire, the land of Sir Walter Scott, "the fields of Ayr" of which he sang in his poem on Robert Burns, and among others Eden Hall in Cumberland, the story of whose famous goblet he had translated in verse years before.

Queen Victoria honored him with an invitation to her castle at Windsor; Gladstone proposed his health at a great public dinner; the

university of Cambridge publicly conferred upon him the honorary degree of LL.D. and that of Oxford the degree of D.C.L. and everyone in the land, of high and low degree was eager to fête him and proud to lay their homage at his feet. He revisited France, Rome, Germany, and Switzerland, and returned to his Cambridge home in September, 1869. But perhaps higher honor than all those showered upon him abroad or at home, and one which he undoubtedly appreciated the most, was that shown to him by the children of his native land when "the spreading chestnut-tree" beneath which the village smithy stood, was cut down. Several hundreds of them contributed their money to have a library chair made for him from the wood. On his seventy-second birthday the chair was placed in his library with appropriate ceremony. No poet in any land has received so much honor from the children, or is so much loved by them as Longfellow. His birthday is celebrated in the schools throughout the length and breadth of the United States by reciting selections from his works and by the reading of biographical and other essays —the composition of the children themselves. His poems are lovingly read and studied as part of the literary education of our children in every grade in our public schools and for their benefit the best scholars of our land have annotated and elucidated them so that they may obtain the

fullest enjoyment and spiritual enlightenment from their study. He wrote and published four or five other volumes of verse, after his return, much of it tinged with a gentle sadness, and an unrepining melancholy over the loss of friends—and sometimes pervaded with the sense of the approach of the inevitable end. Already, he had in his sonnet entitled "Mezzo Cammin"—1842—(half-way on the road) given expression to some thoughts of regret for the past and forecast of the future:

Half of my life is gone, and I have let
The years slip from me, and have not fulfilled
The aspirations of my youth to build
Some tower of song with lofty parapet.
Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret
Of restless passions that would not be stilled;
But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,
Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;

Tho, half-way up the hill, I see the Past
Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,—
A city in the twilight dim and vast,
With smoking roofs, soft bells and gleaming lights,—
And hear above me on the autumnal blast
The cataract of Death far thundering from the height.

His fine group of Sonnets entitled "Three Friends of Mine"—in which he speaks of

"the noble three
Who half my life were more than friends to me,"

recall the closing lines of Tennyson's—"In the Garden at Swainston,"—

"Two dead men have I loved
With a love that ever will be:
Three dead men have I loved, and thou art last of the three."

Longfellow's three dead friends were, Cornelius Felton, Louis Agassiz, and Charles Sumner. He never entirely recovered from the blow which the death of Agassiz caused him, and when Charles Sumner died he wrote:

"Thou hast but taken thy lamp and gone to bed,
I stay a little longer, as one stays,
To cover up the embers that still burn."

Longfellow felt keenly too, the loss of his earliest friend, George Washington Greene, who had been his companion when touring in Europe, half a century before he published his last volume, "Ultima Thule" which was inscribed to him.—Here again the lines,—

"Ultima Thule! utmost isle!
Here in thy harbors for awhile
We lower our sails; awhile we rest
From the unending, ceaseless quest."

recall to us the spirit of Tennyson's last poem "Crossing the Bar."

In October, 1881, he wrote a touching sonnet on the death of President Garfield, and in January, 1882, when the hand of death was already

upon him, his last poem, *Hermes Trismegistus*, in which he gives utterance to that strange feeling of awe without fear, and hope without form, with which every man of spotless life and upright intellect, withdraws from the phenomena of time to the realities of eternity.

In the last years of his life he suffered a great deal from rheumatism, and was, as he sometimes cheerfully said, "never free from pain." Still he remained as sunny and genial as ever, looking from his Cambridge study windows across the Brighton meadows to the Brookline hills, or enjoying the "free wild winds of the Atlantic," and listening to "The Bells of Lynn," in his Nahant home. He still continued to receive visitors, and to take occasional runs up to Castine and Portland, the homes of his family.

About the beginning of 1882, however, a serious change took place in his condition, and he was obliged to withdraw from the public gaze. Dizziness and want of strength confined him to his room for some time, and, although after some weeks he partially recovered, his elasticity and powers were gone. He now acknowledged the receipt of letters with a printed form. At last the end came, and on the 24th of March, after some days of pain, he passed by insensible degrees, into the profound sleep of death.

The poet was buried on the 26th, near his "three friends," in Mount Auburn cemetery.

The regret and grief occasioned by his loss was universal, and unexampled was the respect and honor paid to his memory at home and abroad. England mourned his passing away as passionately as did his native land and she has honored him with a marble bust in the Poets' Corner in Westminster abbey.

Such, imperfectly told, is the mere bald chronicle of the life and work of Longfellow. Volumes of criticism and of appreciation of his work and volumes of admiring testimony to the high worth, and beautiful nobility of his character, and to the course of his lovely life might be added, but they are surely not necessary. He is so dearly familiar to us all, so firmly fixed in the heart of us all that we shall keep him there forever:—

"Yes, forever and a day
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin
And moulder in dust away."

CHARLES WELSH.

LONGFELLOW AS A TRANSLATOR[1]

This edition of the works of Longfellow purposely does not aim at furnishing profoundly critical apparatus and makes no claim to high scholarship in its notes and comments, except in so far as the poet himself has furnished them; for it is intended for the people of all degrees of Culture, who love their Longfellow: and their name is Legion.

In the course of studying the Poet's work as a whole for the purpose of this Edition it has seemed to the Editor that the power, the genius, the felicity of Longfellow as a translator called for some special consideration apart from his original work, the more so because in the course of that consideration we may see how that original work has been infused with the form as well as the spirit of the Literature of other lands.

"The foreign flavor of Longfellow's poetry sweetened the American air," says Katharine Lee Bates, and as Brander Matthews has said "he had acquired the culture of all lands, but he understood also the message of his own Country." "He came," said Walt Whitman, "as the poet of melody, of courtesy and deference, the poet of the mellow past in Italy, Germany,

[1] See the article by Longfellow on "The Art of Translating," Vol. II, p. 406.

Spain, and Northern Europe." His translations of many German and Scandinavian pieces are said to be better than the vernacular and, to quote Mr. Henry T. Tuckerman, "Trained as a verbal artist by the discipline of a poetic translator he acquired a tact and facility in the use of words which great natural fluency and extreme fastidiousness enabled him to use to the utmost advantage. . . . He often reminds us of an excellent mosaic worker."

And there is another reason for giving some extended consideration to the Poet as a Translator; the American Nation, ever since it became a Nation, has been constantly evolving out of the blending of the blood of all the races of the world, which it is ever assimilating with marvellous completeness and celerity; we inherit, we are infused by, and we are transmuting into terms of our own National Individuality, all the Romance, all the Culture, all the Art and all the Literature of the past and present of all the Nations of the World.

And with this National Individuality which is so rapidly being achieved, and always progressing to a higher type, we are developing a Culture which is more and more distinctly American: An Art which is more and more distinctly American: a Literature which is more and more distinctly American.

Few perhaps have realized how much the poet

Longfellow did to help onward this marvellous thought-fusion of the genius, and the forms of its expression, of the races which make up our National Individuality. From the point of view which this distance of time gives us, it is perhaps not so wonderful that almost in the beginnings of our Literary History there should have arisen a poet who found his inspiration for form at least in the work of the bards of other lands, who should have employed these forms in his poetical narratives of the history, thought, and feeling of his own Country and who should have so largely helped to fuse together in our literature, the varied elements of the literature of the peoples of the other Nations of which our own is composed.

I have said elsewhere in this work, from my own schoolboy recollections, and others have said, from riper knowledge and wider experience, that there are among English speaking people other than Americans "thousands of persons not habitually students of Literature, though otherwise well informed and intelligent, who scarcely know whether Longfellow was an Englishman or an American." [1] I have also told how educated Italians talk as if they owned our National Poet, and in this connection it may be recalled that after Longfellow had been a year in Italy the people at the hotel where he lodged

[1] W. J. Dawson in "Quest and Vision."

took him to be an Italian by his speech until he told them he was an American, and that he spoke and wrote Spanish with equal ease and fluency, but it will probably be news to many that some of his essays in original composition in foreign languages have deceived the very elect. For example, I have read some of Longfellow's verses in French, notably those sent to Agassiz with a basket of wine on his birthday and "The Epigram of a Former Young Man on approaching his Fortieth Birthday:—

"Sous le firmament
Tout n'est que changement,
Tout passe"
Le cantique le dit,
Il est ainsi écrit,
Il est sans contredit,
Tout passe.

O douce vie humaine!
O temps qui nous entraine!
Destinée souveraine!
Moi qui, poète rêveur,
Ne fut jamais friseur,
Je frise,—O quelle horreur!
La quarantaine!

to some of my friends in France; on asking them to name the author they have suggested those of many well known French poets and would scarcely believe me when I told them they were the original work of the American Longfellow.

Herein lies as I think the great secret of the success of Longfellow as a Translator—unless one can so read and so speak and so write a language as to get at the sound-feeling as well as the significance of the words, the phrases and the sentences; unless one can hear and feel the rhyme, the rhythm and all that goes to make the music of a language as well as visualize the phraseology and learn the meaning of the words, the true spirit of the writer can never enter the soul.

Such a faculty as Longfellow possessed for acquiring foreign languages is not common: it is an inborn gift, and it may be pertinent to interject here the fact that the poet was a living contradiction to the theory once put forward by a somewhat narrow-minded British statesman that no English-speaking person could be sincere who spoke a foreign language fluently! For never was a soul of sincerity greater than Longfellow's —and there have been few more fluent linguists.

Let us see for a moment how he used and profited by this inborn gift, and how its development was brought about. His earliest tastes and tendencies were towards literature, and very soon in his College career he betrayed his natural bent for the study of foreign tongues. These tastes he was able to cultivate and the result was his appointment as Professor of Foreign Languages at Bowdoin College, with the proviso

that he should pass some time in Europe for the purpose of fitting himself more thoroughly for the post. Accordingly he spent three years in Europe (1826–1829). He resided and travelled in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Germany, learning the languages of these Countries so that he could both speak and write them. Thus he became familiar with most of literary languages of modern Europe. During this residence abroad also, he studied deeply the literature of the countries he visited. He became profoundly interested in the romantic legendary history of mediæval Europe. He studied also contemporary life and character and on his return he translated foreign language textbooks for his students, and compiled original ones, wrote systematic courses of lectures on French, Spanish and Italian Language and Literature, and translated much from these and other languages.

When in 1834, he was offered the Professorship of Modern Languages at Harvard, he felt it necessary to become more intimately acquainted with the German and Scandinavian Languages and Literatures. Accordingly, the next year he went again to Europe, where he remained for nearly two years, staying in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, acquiring the knowledge of the Language, Life and Literature of these Countries and of the Finnish as well, from

which latter he gained the inspiration for the metric form into which Hiawatha was cast—the form of the great epic of "Kalevala." After a stay in Holland where he obtained a knowledge of the Dutch language, he went to Germany, more closely to study its Men and Manners, its Language and its Literature; then after a short time in Switzerland he returned to America and took up his work at Harvard where his duties were for the most part the oversight of the work of the corps of instructors who were teaching French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese to the two or three hundred undergraduates.

The result of all this was that few poets if any ever excelled Longfellow in the difficult art of metrical translation out of foreign tongues and fewer still possessed his wide and profound range of knowledge of European Languages and Literatures. Indeed in his translations his qualities as a literary artist shine quite as brilliantly as in his original work. He became a master of the mechanism of poetry from his studies of the various metrical forms of other lands. He has indeed given us the best existing translations from Swedish, Danish and Spanish, and as Dr. Johnson said of Goldsmith, "he cannot touch without adorning." "He was," says Horace E. Scudder, "a consummate translator. When he came to use rich material of history, of

poetry and of other arts, Longfellow saw these in forms already existing and his art was,—a representation, a re-arrangement of what he found and admired. . . . Thus it is that the lyrical translations which he made in his student days are really his own poems; he rendered the foreign form in a perfect English form," and W. C. Bryant holds that "whether we regard fidelity to the sense, aptness in the form of expression or the skilful transfusion of the poetic spirit of the original into the phrases of another language we can look for nothing more perfect" than the work of Longfellow. "No translation from the Continental languages into the English surpass those of Longfellow," says R. W. Griswold, "and it is questionable whether some of his versions from the Spanish, German and Swedish have been equalled."

Longfellow's translation of the "Divina Commedia," Dante's great work, is so notable a masterpiece that, "Italian scholars being judges, the meaning of the original poem has been conveyed into English as accurately and exactly, word for word and sentence for sentence, as if Dante had written the original poem in English, and, English critics being judges, the poetic structure and splendor of the translation are such that it itself deserves to rank as a great original poem." The late Professor C. E. Norton says of it, "Mr. Longfellow in rendering the substance of

Dante's poem has succeeded in giving also—so far as Art and genius could give it—the spirit of Dante's poetry. It is a lasting addition to the choicest treasures of our Literature," and W. D. Howells remarks that "we stand face to face with the poet and when his voice ceases we may well marvel if he has not sung to us in his own Tuscan—" "The crown of Longfellow's achievements as a translator was a great version of Dante's "Divina Commedia," says H. A. Beers. "It is a severely literal line for line rendering, the most faithful and scholarly paraphrase."—and C. F. Johnson pronounces it as "one of the few great translations of literature."

Thus we see that the high position of Longfellow as a Translator is recognized by those best qualified to judge and that his great gifts in this particular have enabled him to enrich our American Literature as no other poet has done, while his native genius and knowledge and love of his country has given to his original work a distinctly national character and made him the Great American Poet of the People, the Poet of the Home, the Family, the Fireside and the History of our Land and Folk.

CHARLES WELSH.

DANTE [1]

THE earliest of the Italian poets is Ciullo d' Alcamo, the Sicilian, who lived at the close of the twelfth century. From his day to that of Dante, flourished some thirty rhyme-smiths, among whom Brunetto Latini wrote the most, and Beato Benedetti, Guido Guinicelli, and Fra Guittone d' Arezzo the best. Beato Benedetti is the reputed author of the beautiful Latin hymn of "Stabat Mater;" and Guido Guinicelli is the bard whom Dante eulogizes as the writer of

> "Those dulcet lays, all which, as long
> As of our tongue the beauty does not fade,
> Shall make us love the very ink that wrote them."

The age of Dante was an age of violence, when the law of force prevailed. The Florentines were an heroic people. They declared war by sending a bloody glove to their enemy; and the onset of battle was sounded, not by the blast of trumpets, but by the ringing of a great bell, which was wheeled about the field. Florence was then a republic. So were all the neighboring

[1] This essay on Dante which was originally published in "Outre-Mer" was written as early as 1838. The more fitting place for it would seem to be here. C. W.

states. The spirit of liberty was wild, not easily tamed, not easily subjected to laws. Amid civil discords, family feuds, tavern quarrels, street broils, and the disaffection of the poor towards the rich, it was in vain for Fra Giovanni to preach the "Kiss of Peace." Buondelmonte was dragged from his horse and murdered at the base of Mars's statue, in broad day; Ricoverino de' Cerchi had his nose cut off in a ball-room; and the exile of Dante can be traced back to a drunken quarrel between Godfrey Cancellieri and his cousin Amadoro in a tavern at Pistoja.

The pride of human intellect in that age was displayed in the scholastic philosophy. Peter Lombard, the Wise Master of Sentences, had been mouldering in his grave just one hundred years when Dante was born; and the mystic poet was still a child, when the Angelic Doctor, Thomas Aquinas,—called by his schoolmates, at Cologne, the Dumb Ox,—having at length fulfilled the prophecy of his master, Albertus Magnus, and given "such a bellow in learning as was heard all over the world," had fallen asleep in the Cistercian convent at Terracina, saying, "This is my rest for ages without end." These great masters were gone; but others had arisen to take their places; and to teach that the true religion is the true philosophy, and the true philosophy the true religion. Among these were Henry of Göthüls, the *Doctor Solemnis,*

and Richard of Middletown, the *Doctor Solidus,* and Giles of Cologne, the *Doctor Fundatissimus,* and John Duns Scotus, the *Doctor Subtilis* and founder of the Formalists,—who taught that the end of philosophy is, to find out the quiddity of things,—that every thing has a kind of quiddity or quidditive existence,—and that nothingness is divided into absolute nothingness, which has no quiddity or thingness, and relative nothingness, which has no existence out of the understanding. Side by side with these stood Raymond Lully, the *Doctor Illuminatus,* and Francis of Mayence, the *Magister Acutus Abstractionum,* and William Durand, the *Doctor Resolutissimus,* and Walter Burleigh, the *Doctor Planus et Perspicuus,* and William Occam, the *Doctor Invincibilis, Singularis, et Venerabilis.* These were men of acute and masculine intellect:

> "For in those dark and iron days of old,
> Arose, amid the pigmies of their age,
> Minds of a massive and gigantic mould,
> Whom we must measure as the Cretan sage
> Measured the pyramids of ages past,
> By the far-reaching shadows that they cast."

These philosophic studies are here alluded to because they exercised a powerful influence upon the poetry of Dante and of his age. As we look back upon that age with reference to the theme before us, from the confused grouping of history a few figures stand forth in stronger light

and shade. The first is a tall, thin personage, clothed in black. His face is that of a scholar; his manners are grave and modest, he has a pleasant, humorous mouth, and a jesting eye, which somewhat temper his modest gravity. In his whole appearance there is a strange mixture of the schoolmaster, philosopher, and notary public. He has been a traveller, and a soldier, and the author of much rhyme. He fought in the campaign of Siena, and, after the war, wrote with his own hand the treaty of peace between the two republics, which, it is to be hoped, was better written than his rhymes. This is Brunetto Latini, the instructor of Dante in his youth,—who rewards his services with a place in the "Inferno,"—grammarian, theologian, politician, poet, and Grand-Master of Rhetoric in Florence. His principal work is the poem of the "Tesoro," which he wrote in France and in the French language. It is a kind of doggerel encyclopædia, containing, among other matters, the History of the Old and New Testament, to which is appended an abridgment of Pliny's "Natural History," the "Ethics" of Aristotle, and a treatise on the Virtues and Vices; together with the Art of speaking with Propriety, and the Manner of governing the Republic! He wrote, likewise, a poem called the "Tesoretto,"—a small treasury of moral precepts; also a satirical poem called

"Il Pataffio," in the vulgar Florentine street-jargon, very difficult of comprehension.

He is followed by a nobler figure; a youth of beautiful but melancholy countenance, courteous in manner, yet proud and solitary. He seems lost in thought, and is much alone among the old tombs,—the marble sepulchres about the church of St. John. In vain do Betto Bruneleschi and his boon companions come dashing up on horseback, and make a jest of his dreams and reveries. He turns away and disappears among the tombs. This is Guido Cavalcanti, the bosom friend of Dante, and no mean poet. But he loves the dreams of philosophy better than the dreams of poetry, and the popular belief is, that all his solitary studies and meditations have no other object than to prove that there is no God. It is of this Guido that the poet speaks in the tenth canto of the "Inferno," where a form looks out of its fiery sepulchre and asks, "Where is my son? and why is he not with thee?"

And now, attended by two courtly dames, a maiden clad in white approaches. She is veiled; but from beneath the veil look forth soft emerald eyes,—eyes of the color of the sea.[1] Well might it be said of her,

"An eagle
Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye."

[1] Erano i suoi occhi d' un turchino verdiccio, simile a quel del mare.— LANI, *Annotazioni.*

So beautiful is she, that many in the crowd exclaim, as she passes, "This is no mortal, but one of God's angels." And this is Beatrice; and she walks all crowned and garmented with humility, showing no vainglory of that which she beholds and hears.[1]

The figure that advances to meet her is that of a young man of middle stature, with a dark, melancholy, thoughtful face. His eyes are large, his nose aquiline, his lower lip projecting, his hair and beard thick, black, and curled. His step is quiet and solemn. He is clothed in long, flowing garments, and wears sandals on his feet, and on his head a cap, from which two broad bands descend upon the shoulders. This is Dante.

But the crowd throng around us, and we behold but indistinctly the shadowy images of Guido Novello, and Francesco Malaspina, and the great Lombard, Can Grande della Scala, and Giano della Bella, the friend of the Florentine populace; and the superb Philippo Argenti, his horse's hoofs shod with silver; and Corso, Donati the proud, bad man, but valiant cavalier and eloquent orator, dragged at his horse's heels, and murdered at the gate of a convent; and Monferrato, exposed, like a wild beast, in a wooden cage in the market-place, and dying broken-hearted with rage and humiliation.

1 Ella, coronata e vestita d' umiltà, s' andava, nulla gloria mostrando di ciò ch' ella vedeva ed udiva.—DANTE, *Vita Nuova.*

Dante was the son of Alighiero degli Alighieri, and was christened in the church of Saint John the Baptist by the name of Durante; which name was playfully changed in childhood to Dante. He was born in Florence, in May, 1265, and died at Ravenna, in September, 1321.

The life of Dante naturally divides itself into three epochs, each of which is very distinctly marked. The first is that of his early youth,—from his birth to the time when Beatrice died;—a period of twenty-five years. The second, his public and political life;—a period of twelve years, in the prime of early manhood, from the age of twenty-five to that of thirty-seven, when he was banished from Florence. And the third, his exile, and wanderings, and death;—a period of nineteen years; namely, from the age of thirty-seven to that of fifty-six.

What Dante's youth was we know from his own lips, and from the busy pens of many biographers. It was a quiet, peaceful youth, passed in the study of philosophy, and music, and painting, and poetry; and in the companionship of learned men and artists, such as Latini, Cavalcante, Giotto, and Casella. Into this, perhaps, sober-colored warp of life was early woven the bright, dream-like figure of Beatrice. As he himself tells us, he had not yet completed his ninth year when he beheld her for the first time; and to use his own words, "The spirit of life,

that dwelleth in the most secret chambers of the heart, all-trembling, spake these words: 'Behold a god more powerful than I!' " Boccaccio says that this was at a May-day festival,—"in that season, when the mildness of heaven reclothes the earth with its own ornaments, and all with manifold flowers mingled among the verdant leaves maketh her to laugh." [1]

Beatrice died in youth. She had not yet completed her twenty-fourth year.[2] Soon afterwards, Dante was unhappily married to Madonna Gemma de' Donati.

Such was the first epoch of Dante's life. The second, which embraces his public and political career, was as full of trouble as the first was full of peace. Now came the clash of parties, and the battles of Campaldino and Pisa, and the fourteen embassies treading close upon each other's heels. So much astir were all men, and Dante, in the midst of all, so busy with the affairs of state, so necessary at home and abroad,—that he exclaims, despairing of the power of others to govern the republic,—"If I stay, who is there to go? If I go, who is there to stay?"

It was on one of these political pilgrimages that he left Florence for Rome, never more to

[1] Nel tempo, nel quale la dolcezza del cielo riveste de' suoi ornamenti la terra, e tutta per la varietà de' fiori mescolati tra le verdi frondi la fa ridente.— *Vita di Dante.*

[2] Boccaccio says that Beatrice was married to Simone de' Bardi; and of Dante's marriage he says: O inconceivable torture! to live, and converse, and grow old, and die with such a jealous creature!"

DANTE IN EXILE IN RAVENNA

enter the gates of his native city. They were closed against him forever. But in the words of Michel Angelo,

> "Heaven unbarred to him her lofty gates,
> To whom his country hers refused to ope."

Being at Rome, he heard the sentence pronounced against him; perpetual exile, confiscation of his property, and death by fire, should he ever again set foot in Florence.

Thus, in the life of Dante, closes the second epoch, and the third begins;—a long and sorrowful period of nineteen years, closing with his death. The prior of Florence was now a poor and homeless man. The companion of the rich and great was now their pensioner. Their roofs sheltered him,—their hands gave him bread. Well might he exclaim, in piteous accents,—"I am sorry for all who suffer; but I have greater pity for those who, being in exile, behold their native land in dreams only." One may easily believe, that to the lips of those "who have drunk the waters of the Arno before they had teeth," the waters of all other streams would have a bitter taste.

We need not follow the poet in his wanderings, blown to and fro "by the sharp wind that springs from sad poverty." There are, however, one or two scenes in this last mournful period of his life, which cannot be passed over in silence. They are too striking and characteristic, not to

find a place here. The first is an interview of the exiled poet with Frate Ilario in the convent of the Corvo. These are the monk's own words, as he wrote them down at the time, in a letter to Uguccione della Faggiuola, one of Dante's fast and faithful friends.[1]

"Hither he came, passing through the diocese of Luni, moved either by the religion of the place, or by some other feeling. And seeing him, as yet unknown to me and to all my brethren, I questioned him of his wishings and his seekings there. He moved not; but stood silently contemplating the columns and arches of the cloister. And again I asked him what he wished and whom he sought. Then, slowly turning his head, and looking at the friars and at me, he answered: *'Pace!'* Thence kindling more and more the wish to know him and who he might be, I led him aside somewhat, and, having spoken a few words with him, I knew him; for although I had never seen him till that hour, his fame had long since reached me. And when he saw that I hung upon his countenance, and listened to him with strange affection, he drew from his bosom a book, did gently open it, and offered it to me, saying: 'Sir Friar, here is a portion of my work, which peradventure thou hast not seen. This remembrance I leave with thee. Forget me

[1] The full letter is given later, p. 66.

not.' And when he had given me the book, I pressed it gratefully to my bosom, and in his presence fixed my eyes upon it with great love. But I beholding there the vulgar tongue, and showing by the fashion of my countenance my wonderment thereat, he asked the reason of the same. I answered, that I marvelled he should sing in that language; for it seemed a difficult thing, nay, incredible, that those most high conceptions could be expressed in common language; nor did it seem to me right that such and so worthy a science should be clothed in such plebeian garments. 'You think aright,' he said, 'and I myself have thought so. And when at first the seeds of these matters, perhaps inspired by Heaven, began to bud, I chose that language which was most worthy of them: and not alone chose it, but began forthwith to poetize therein, after this wise:

> "Ultima regna canam fluido contermina mundo,
> Spiritibus quæ lata patent; quæ præmia solvunt
> Pro meritis cuicumque suis."

But when I recalled the condition of the present age, and saw the songs of the illustrious poets esteemed almost as naught, and knew that the generous men, for whom in better days these things were written, had abandoned, ah me! the liberal arts unto vulgar hands, I threw aside the delicate lyre, which had armed my flank, and at-

tuned another more befitting the ear of moderns;—for the food that is hard we hold in vain to the mouths of sucklings.' "

And not less striking is the closing scene of that eventful life; when, his work on earth accomplished, the great poet lay down to die, in the palace of Ravenna, wrapped in the cowl and mantle of a Franciscan friar. By his side was his friend Guido Novello, the nephew of that lovely Francesca, whose passionate desires and cruel death have become immortal in the poet's song. It was the day of the Holy Cross; and, perhaps, a solemn anthem was the last sound that reached the ears of the dying man, when, between life and death, "he beheld eyes of light, that wandered like stars." And after death the cowl and mantle were removed, and he was clothed in the garments of a poet; and his friend pronounced his eulogy in the palace.

Thus died the greatest of the Italian poets; and it may truly be said, that the gloomy forests of Ravenna seem still to breathe forth the sighs of the dying man; so intimately associated with his spirit are all the places that knew him upon earth!

Dante's writings are the "Vita Nuova," a romantic record of his early life and love, written in prose, and interspersed with sonnets and canzoni; the "Convito," a prose commentary upon three canzoni, to which the reader is invited as

to a festival; the "Canzoniere," or collection of sonnets and canzoni; the two Latin treatises, "De Monarchiâ," and "De Vulgari Eloquentiâ;" and the great masterpiece and labor of his mature life, the "Divina Commedia."

The "Divina Commedia" is not what we understand by an allegorical poem in the strict sense of the word,—in the same sense, for instance, as the "Faery Queen." And yet it is full of allegory; full of literal and figurative meanings; full of symbols and things signified. Dante himself says, in a letter which he sent with the poem to his friend Can Grande della Scala: "It is to be remarked, that the sense of this work is not simple; but on the contrary, one may say, manifold. For the first sense is that which it derives from its language; and another is that which it derives from the things signified by the language;—the one, literal; the other, allegorical. . . . The subject of the whole work, taken literally, is the condition of the soul after death. But if you well observe the express words, you will easily perceive, that, in an allegorical sense, the poet is treating of this hell, in which, journeying onward like travellers, we may deserve reward or punishment." The machinery, then, of the poem is allegorical; but the characters are real personages, in their true forms. Among these some masks and disguises are introduced:—the Age; the Church; the Empire of Rome; the

Virtues, shining as stars, &c. Properly speaking, the poem is a mixture of realities and symbols, as best suits the author's feeling at the moment.[1]

We are to consider the Divine Poem as the mirror of the age in which its author lived; or rather, perhaps, as a mirror of Italy in that age. The principal historic events and personages, the character and learning of the time, are faithfully imaged and reproduced therein. Most of the events described had just transpired; most of the persons were just dead; the memory of both was still warm in the minds of men. The poet did not merely imagine, as a possibility; but felt, as a reality. He was wandering about homeless, as he composed; almost borrowing the ink he wrote with. They who had wronged him still lived to wrong him further. No wonder, then, that in his troubled, burning soul arose great thoughts and awful, like Farinata, from his burning sepulchre. When he approached a city's gates, he could not but be reminded that into the gates of Florence he could go no more. When he beheld the towers of feudal castles cresting the distant hills, he felt how arrogant are the strong, how much abused the weak. Every brook and river reminded him of the Arno, and the brooklets that descend from Casentino. Every voice he heard told him, by its strange accent, that he was an

[1] See, upon this subject, Rossetti, Spirito Antipapale de' Classici Italiani, Cap. V.

exile; and every home he saw said to him, in its sympathies even, "Thou art homeless!" All these things found expression in his poem; and much of the beautiful description of landscape, and of the morning and the evening, bears the freshness of that impression which is made on the mind of a foot-traveller, who sits under the trees at noon, and leaves or enters towns when the morning or evening bells are ringing, and he has only to hear "how many a tale their music tells."

Dante, in his Latin treatise "De Monarchiâ," says, that man is a kind of middle term between the corruptible and the incorruptible, and, being thus twofold in his nature, is destined to a two-fold end; "namely, to happiness in this life, which consists in the practice of virtue, and is figured forth in the Terrestrial Paradise; and eternal beatitude, which consists in the fruition of the divine presence; to which we cannot arrive by any virtue of our own, unless aided by divine light; and this is the Celestial Paradise." [1] This idea forms the thread of the "Commedia."

Midway in life the poet finds himself lost in the gloomy forest of worldly cares, beset by Pride, Avarice, and Sensual Pleasure. Moral Philosophy, embodied in the form of Virgil, leads him forth through the Hell of Worldly sin and passion and suffering, through the Purgatory of

[1] De Monarchiâ, Cap. 92, 93.

repentant feelings, to the quiet repose of earthly happiness. Farther than this mere philosophy cannot go. Here Divine Wisdom, or Theology, in the form of Beatrice, receives the pilgrim, and ascending from planet to planet, guides him through the ten heavens of Paradise.

Upon this slender golden thread hangs this universe of a poem; in which things visible have their appointed place, and the spheres and populous stars revolve harmonious about their centre.

LITERARY ILLUSTRATIONS

of Dante, His Works, His Epoch and His Contemporaries Collected, Edited and Arranged By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

LITERARY ILLUSTRATIONS OF DANTE

L' OTTIMO COMENTO

Inferno X. 85.

I, the writer, heard Dante say that never a rhyme had led him to say other than he would, but that many a time and oft he had made words say in his rhymes what they were not wont to express for other poets.

VILLANI'S NOTICE OF DANTE

Cronica, Lib. IX. cap 136. Tr. in Napier's Florentine History, Book I. ch. 16.

In the month of July, 1321, died the Poet Dante Alighieri of Florence, in the city of Ravenna in Romagna, after his return from an embassy to Venice for the Lords of Polenta with whom he resided; and in Ravenna before the door of the principal church he was interred with high honor, in the habit of a poet and great philosopher. He died in banishment from the community of Florence, at the age of about fifty-six. This Dante was an honorable and ancient citizen of Porta San Piero at Florence, and our neighbor; and his exile from Florence was on the

occasion of Charles of Valois, of the house of France, coming to Florence in 1301, and the expulsion of the White party, as has already in its place been mentioned. The said Dante was of the supreme governors of our city, and of that party although a Guelf; and therefore without any other crime was with the said White party expelled and banished from Florence; and he went to the University of Bologna, and into many parts of the world. This was a great and learned person in almost every science, although a layman; he was a consummate poet and philosopher and rhetorician; as perfect in prose and verse as he was in public speaking a most noble orator; in rhyming excellent, with the most polished and beautiful style that ever appeared in our language up to his time or since. He wrote in his youth the book of *The Early Life of Love,* and afterwards when in exile made twenty moral and amorous canzonets very excellent, and amongst other things three noble epistles: one he sent to the Florentine government, complaining of his undeserved exile; another to the Emperor Henry when he was at the siege of Brescia, reprehending him for his delay, and almost prophesying; the third to the Italian cardinals during the vacancy after the death of Pope Clement, urging them to agree in electing an Italian Pope; all in Latin, with noble precepts and excellent sentences and authorities, which were much com-

mended by the wise and learned. And he wrote the *Commedia,* where, in polished verse and with great and subtile arguments, moral, natural, astrological, philosophical, and theological, with new and beautiful figures, similes, and poetical graces, he composed and treated in a hundred chapters or cantos of the existence of hell, purgatory, and paradise; so loftily as may be said of it, that whoever is of subtile intellect may by his said treatise perceive and understand. He was well pleased in this poem to blame and cry out, in the manner of poets, in some places perhaps more than he ought to have done; but it may be that his exile made him do so. He also wrote the *Monarchia,* where he treats of the office of popes and emperors. And he began a comment on fourteen of the above-named moral canzonets in the vulgar tongue, which in consequence of his death is found imperfect except on three, which to judge from what is seen would have proved a lofty, beautiful, subtile, and most important work; because it is equally ornamented with noble opinions and fine philosophical and astrological reasoning. Besides these he composed a little book which he entitled *De Vulgari Eloquentia,* of which he promised to make four books, but only two are to be found, perhaps in consequence of his early death; where, in powerful and elegant Latin and good reasoning, he rejects all the vulgar tongues of Italy. This Dante, from his

knowledge, was somewhat presumptuous, harsh, and disdainful, like an ungracious philosopher; he scarcely deigned to converse with laymen; but for his other virtues, science, and worth as a citizen, it seems but reasonable to give him perpetual remembrance in this our chronicle; nevertheless, his noble works, left to us in writing, bear true testimony of him, and honorable fame to our city.

LETTER OF FRATE ILARIO

Arrivabene, Comento Storico, p. 379.

. . . Hither he came, passing through the diocese of Luni, moved either by the religion of the place, or by some other feeling. And seeing him, as yet unknown to me and to all my brethren, I questioned him of his wishings and his seekings there. He moved not; but stood silently contemplating the columns and arches of the cloister. And again I asked him what he wished, and whom he sought. Then, slowly turning his head, and looking at the friars and at me, he answered: "Peace!" Thence kindling more and more the wish to know him and who he might be, I led him aside somewhat, and, having spoken a few words with him, I knew him; for although I had never seen him till that hour, his fame had long since reached me. And when he

saw that I hung upon his countenance, and listened to him with strange affection, he drew from his bosom a book, did gently open it, and offered it to me, saying: "Sir Friar, here is a portion of my work, which peradventure thou hast not seen. This remembrance I leave with thee. Forget me not." And when he had given me the book, I pressed it gratefully to my bosom, and in his presence fixed my eyes upon it with great love. But I beholding there the vulgar tongue, and showing by the fashion of my countenance my wonderment thereat, he asked the reason of the same. I answered, that I marvelled he should sing in that language; for it seemed a difficult thing, nay, incredible, that those most high conceptions could be expressed in common language; nor did it seem to me right that such and so worthy a science should be clothed in such plebeian garments. "You think aright," he said, "and I myself have thought so. And when at first the seeds of these matters, perhaps inspired by Heaven, began to bud, I chose that language which was most worthy of them: and not alone chose it, but began forthwith to poetize therein, after this wise:

> 'Ultima regna canam fluido contermina mundo,
> Spiritibus quæ lata patent; quæ præmia solvunt
> Pro meritis cuicumque suis.'

But when I recalled the condition of the present age, and saw the songs of the illustrious poets

esteemed almost as naught, and knew that the generous men, for whom in better days these things were written, had abandoned, ah me! the liberal arts unto vulgar hands, I threw aside the delicate lyre, which had armed my flank, and attuned another more befitting the ear of moderns; —for the food that is hard we hold in vain to the mouths of sucklings."

Having said this, he added with emotion, that, if the occasion served, I should make some brief annotations upon the work, and, thus apparailed, should forward it to you. Which task in truth, although I may not have extracted all the marrow of his words, I have nevertheless performed with fidelity; and the work required of me I frankly send you, as was enjoined upon me by that most friendly man; in which work, if it appear that any ambiguity still remains, you must impute it to my insufficiency, for there is no doubt that the text is perfect in all points. . . .

PASSAGE FROM THE CONVITO, I. iii.

Leigh Hunt, Stories from the Italian Poets, p. 12.

Ah! would it had pleased the Dispenser of all things that this excuse had never been needed; that neither others had done me wrong, nor myself undergone penalty undeservedly,—the penalty, I say, of exile and of poverty. For it

pleased the citizens of the fairest and most renowned daughter of Rome—Florence—to cast me out of her most sweet bosom, where I was born, and bred, and passed half of the life of man, and in which, with her good leave, I still desire with all my heart to repose my weary spirit, and finish the days allotted me; and so I have wandered in almost every place to which our language extends, a stranger, almost a beggar, exposing against my will the wounds given me by fortune, too often unjustly imputed to the sufferer's fault. Truly I have been a vessel without sail and without rudder, driven about upon different ports and shores by the dry wind that springs out of dolorous poverty; and hence have I appeared vile in the eyes of many, who, perhaps, by some better report had conceived of me a different impression, and in whose sight not only has my person become thus debased, but an unworthy opinion created of everything which I did, or which I had to do.

DANTE'S LETTER TO A FRIEND

Leigh Hunt, Stories from the Italian Poets, p. 13.

From your letter, which I received with due respect and affection, I observe how much you have at heart my restoration to my country. I am bound to you the more gratefully, inasmuch

as an exile rarely finds a friend. But after mature consideration I must, by my answer, disappoint the wishes of some little minds; and I confide in the judgment to which your impartiality and prudence will lead you. Your nephew and mine has written to me, what indeed had been mentioned by many other friends, that by a decree concerning the exiles I am allowed to return to Florence, provided I pay a certain sum of money, and submit to the humiliation of asking and receiving absolution: wherein, my father, I see two propositions that are ridiculous and impertinent. I speak of the impertinence of those who mention such conditions to me; for in your letter, dictated by judgment and discretion, there is no such thing. Is such an invitation, then, to return to his country glorious to Dante Alighieri, after suffering in exile almost fifteen years? Is it thus they would recompense innocence which all the world knows, and the labor and fatigue of unremitting study? Far from the man who is familiar with philosophy be the senseless baseness of a heart of earth, that could act like a little sciolist, and imitate the infamy of some others, by offering himself up as it were in chains: far from the man who cries aloud for justice, this compromise by his money with his persecutors. No, my father, this is not the way that shall lead me back to my country. I will return

with hasty steps, if you or any other can open to me a way that shall not derogate from the fame and honor of Dante; but if by no such way Florence can be entered, then Florence I shall never enter. What! shall I not everywhere enjoy the light of the sun and stars? and may I not seek and contemplate, in every corner of the earth, under the canopy of heaven, consoling and delightful truth, without first rendering myself inglorious, nay infamous, to the people and republic of Florence? Bread, I hope, will not fail me.

PORTRAITS OF DANTE

By Charles E. Norton.

In his *Life of Dante,* Boccaccio, the earliest of the biographers of the poet, describes him in these words: "Our poet was of middle height, and after reaching mature years he went somewhat stooping; his gait was grave and sedate; always clothed in most becoming garments, his dress was suited to the ripeness of his years; his face was long, his nose aquiline, his eyes rather large than small, his jaw heavy, and his under lip prominent; his complexion was dark, and his hair and beard thick, black, and crisp, and his countenance was always sad and thoughtful. . . . His manners, whether in public or at home, were won-

derfully composed and restrained, and in all his ways he was more courteous and civil than any one else."

Such was Dante as he appeared in his later years to those from whose recollections of him Boccaccio drew this description.

But Boccaccio, had he chosen so to do, might have drawn another portrait of Dante, not the author of the *Divine Comedy,* but the author of the *New Life.* The likeness of the youthful Dante was familiar to those Florentines who had never looked on the living presence of their greatest citizen.

On the altar-wall of the chapel of the Palace of the Podestà (now the Bargello) Giotto had painted a grand religious composition, in which, after the fashion of the times, he exalted the glory of Florence by the introduction of some of her most famous citizens into the assembly of the blessed in Paradise. "The head of Christ, full of dignity, appears above, and lower down, the escutcheon of Florence, supported by angels, with two rows of saints, male and female, attendant to the right and left, in front of whom stand a company of the *magnates* of the city, headed by two crowned personages, close to one of whom, to the right, stands Dante, a pomegranate in his hand, and wearing the graceful falling cap of the day." [1] The date when this pic-

[1] Lord Lindsay's *History of Christian Art,* Vol. II. p. 174.

ture was painted is uncertain, but Giotto represented his friend in it as a youth, such as he may have been in the first flush of early fame, at the season of the beginning of their memorable friendship.

Of all the portraits of the revival of Art, there is none comparable in interest to this likeness of the supreme poet by the supreme artist of mediæval Europe. It was due to no accident of fortune that these men were contemporaries, and of the same country; but it was a fortunate and delightful incident, that they were so brought together by sympathy of genius and by favoring circumstance as to become friends, to love and honor each other in life, and to celebrate each other through all time in their respective works. The story of their friendship is known only in its outline, but that it began when they were young is certain, and that it lasted till death divided them is a tradition which finds ready acceptance.

It was probably between 1290 and 1300, when Giotto was just rising to unrivalled fame, that this painting was executed. There is no contemporary record of it, the earliest known reference to it being that by Filippo Villani, who died about 1404. Gianozzo Manetti, who died in 1459, also mentions it, and Vasari, in his *Life of Giotto,* published in 1550, says, that Giotto "became so good an imitator of nature, that he alto-

gether discarded the stiff Greek manner, and revived the modern and good art of painting, introducing exact drawing from nature of living persons, which for more than two hundred years had not been practised, or if indeed any one had tried it, he had not succeeded very happily, nor anything like so well as Giotto. And he portrayed among other persons, as may even now be seen, in the chapel of the Palace of the Podestà in Florence, Dante Alighieri, his contemporary and greatest friend, who was not less famous a poet than Giotto was painter in those days. . . . In the same chapel is the portrait by the same hand of Ser Brunetto Latini, the master of Dante, and of Messer Corso Donati, a great citizen of those times."

One might have supposed that such a picture as this would have been among the most carefully protected and jealously prized treasures of Florence. But such was not the case. The shameful neglect of many of the best and most interesting works of the earlier period of Art, which accompanied and was one of the symptoms of the moral and political decline of Italy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, extended to this as to other of the noblest paintings of Giotto. Florence, in losing consciousness of present worth, lost care for the memorials of her past honor dignity, and distinction. The Palace of the Podestà, no longer needed for the dwelling of the

chief magistrate of a free city, was turned into a jail for common criminals, and what had once been its beautiful and sacred chapel was occupied as a larder or store-room. The walls, adorned with paintings more precious than gold, were covered with whitewash, and the fresco of Giotto was swept over by the brush of the plasterer. It was not only thus hidden from the sight of those unworthy indeed to behold it, but it almost disappeared from memory also; and from the time of Vasari down to that of Moreni, a Florentine antiquary, in the early part of the present century, hardly a mention of it occurs. In a note found among his papers, Moreni laments that he had spent two years of his life in unavailing efforts to recover the portrait of Dante, and the other portions of the fresco of Giotto in the Bargello, mentioned by Vasari; that others before him had made a like effort, and had failed in like manner; and that he hoped that better times would come, in which this painting, of such historic and artistic interest, would again be sought for, and at length recovered. Stimulated by these words, three gentlemen, one an American, Mr. Richard Henry Wilde, one an Englishman, Mr. Seymour Kirkup, and one an Italian, Signor G. Aubrey Bezzi, all scholars devoted to the study of Dante, undertook new researches, in 1840, and, after many hinderances on the part of the government, which were at length successfully overcome, the

work of removing the crust of plaster from the walls of the ancient chapel was intrusted to the Florentine painter, Marini. This new and well-directed search did not fail. After some months' labor the fresco was found, almost uninjured, under the whitewash that had protected while concealing it, and at length the likeness of Dante was uncovered.

"But," says Mr. Kirkup, in a letter published in the *Spectator* (London), May 11, 1850, "the eye of the beautiful profile was wanting. There was a hole an inch deep, or an inch and a half. Marini said it was a nail. It did seem precisely the damage of a nail drawn out. Afterwards . . . Marini filled the hole, and made a new eye, too little and ill designed, and then he retouched the whole face and clothes, to the great damage of the expression and character. The likeness of the face, and the three colors in which Dante was dressed, the same which those of Beatrice, those of young Italy, white, green, and red, stand no more; the green is turned to chocolate-color; moreover, the form of the cap is lost and confounded.

"I desired to make a drawing. . . . It was denied to me. . . . But I obtained the means to be shut up in the prison for a morning; and not only did I make a drawing, but a tracing also, and with the two I then made a fac-simile

sufficiently careful. Luckily it was before the *rifacimento.*"

This fac-simile afterwards passed into the hands of Lord Vernon, well known for his interest in all Dantesque studies, and by his permission it had been admirably reproduced in chromo-lithography under the auspices of the Arundel Society. The reproduction is entirely satisfactory as a presentation of the authentic portrait of the youthful Dante, in the state in which it was when Mr. Kirkup was so fortunate as to gain admission to it. . . .

This portrait by Giotto is the only likeness of Dante known to have been made of the poet during his life, and is of inestimable value on this account. But there exists also a mask, concerning which there is a tradition that it was taken from the face of the dead poet, and which, if its genuineness could be established, would not be of inferior interest to the early portrait. But there is no trustworthy historic testimony concerning it, and its authority as a likeness depends upon the evidence of truth which its own character affords. On the very threshold of the inquiry concerning it, we are met with the doubt whether the art of taking casts was practised at the time of Dante's death. In his *Life of Andrea de Verrocchio,* Vasari says that this art began to come into use in his time, that is, about the middle of

the fifteenth century; and Bottari refers to the likeness of Brunelleschi, who died in 1446, which was taken in this manner, and was preserved in the office of the Works of the Cathedral at Florence. It is not impossible that so simple an art may have been sometimes practised at an earlier period; and if so, there is no inherent improbability in the supposition that Guido Novello, the friend and protector of Dante at Ravenna, may, at the time of the poet's death, have had a mask taken to serve as a model for the head of a statue intended to form part of the monument which he proposed to erect in honor of Dante. And it may further be supposed, that, this design failing, owing to the fall of Guido from power before its accomplishment, the mask may have been preserved at Ravenna, till we first catch a trace of it nearly three centuries later.

There is in the Magliabecchiana Library at Florence an autograph manuscript by Giovanni Cinelli, a Florentine antiquary who died in 1706, entitled *La Toscana letterata, ovvero Istoria degli Scrittori Fiorentini,* which contains a life of Dante. In the course of the biography of Cinelli states that the Archbishop of Ravenna caused the head of the poet which had adorned his sepulchre to be taken therefrom, and that it came into the possession of the famous sculptor, Gian Bologna, who left it at his death, in 1606, to his pupil Pietro Tacca. "One day Tacca

showed it, with other curiosities, to the Duchess Sforza, who, having wrapped it in a scarf of green cloth, carried it away, and God knows into whose hands the precious object has fallen, or where it is to be found. . . . On account of its singular beauty, it had often been drawn by the scholars of Tacca." It has been supposed that this head was the original mask from which the casts now existing are derived. Mr. Seymour Kirkup, in a note on this passage from Cinelli, says that "there are three masks of Dante at Florence, all of which have been judged by the first Roman and Florentine sculptors to have been taken from life, [that is, from the face after death,]—the slight differences noticeable between them being such as might occur in casts made from the original mask." One of these casts was given to Mr. Kirkup by the sculptor Bartolini, another belonged to the late sculptor Professor Ricci, and the third is in the possession of the Marchese Torrigiani. . . .

In the absence of historical evidence in regard to this mask, some support is given to the belief in its genuineness by the fact that it appears to be the type of the greater number of the portraits of Dante executed from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, and was adopted by Raffaelle as the original from which he drew the likeness which has done most to make the features of the poet familiar to the world.

The character of the mask itself affords, however, the only really satisfactory ground for confidence in the truth of the tradition concerning it. It was plainly taken as a cast from a face after death. It has none of the characteristics which a fictitious and imaginative representation of the sort would be likely to present. It bears no trace of being a work of skilful and deceptive art. The difference in the fall of the two half-closed eyelids, the difference between the sides of the face, the slight deflection in the line of the nose, the droop of the corners of the mouth, and other delicate, but none the less convincing indications, combine to show that it was in all probability taken directly from nature. The countenance, moreover, and expression, are worthy of Dante; no ideal forms could so answer to the face of him who had led a life apart from the world in which he dwelt, and had been conducted by love and faith along hard, painful, and solitary ways, to behold

"L' alto trionfo del regno verace."

The mask conforms entirely to the description by Boccaccio of the poet's countenance, save that it is beardless, and this difference is to be accounted for by the fact that to obtain the cast the beard must have been removed.

The face is one of the most pathetic upon which human eyes ever looked, for it exhibits in its expression the conflict between the strong na-

ture of the man and the hard dealings of fortune,—between the idea of his life and its practical experience. Strength is the most striking attribute of the countenance, displayed alike in the broad forehead, the masculine nose, the firm lips, the heavy jaw and wide chin; and this strength, resulting from the main forms of the features, is enforced by the strength of the lines of expression. The look is grave and stern almost to grimness; there is a scornful lift to the eyebrow, and a contraction of the forehead as from painful thought; but obscured under this look, yet not lost, are the marks of tenderness, refinement, and self-mastery, which, in combination with the more obvious characteristics, give to the countenance of the dead poet an ineffable dignity and melancholy. There is neither weakness nor failure here. It is the image of the strong fortress of a strong soul "buttressed on conscience and impregnable will," battered by the blows of enemies without and within, bearing upon its walls the dints of many a siege, but standing firm and unshaken against all attacks until the warfare was at end.

The intrinsic evidence for the truth of this likeness, from its correspondence, not only with the description of the poet, but with the imagination that we form of him from his life and works, is strongly confirmed by a comparison of the mask with the portrait by Giotto. So far as I

am aware, this comparison has not hitherto been made in a manner to exhibit effectively the resemblance between the two. A direct comparison between the painting and the mask, owing to the difficulty of reducing the forms of the latter to a plain surface of light and shade, is unsatisfactory. But by taking a photograph from the mask, in the same position as that in which the face is painted by Giotto, and placing it alongside of the fac-simile from the painting, a very remarkable similarity becomes at once apparent. . . . The differences are only such as must exist between the portrait of a man in the freshness of a happy youth, and the portrait of him in his age, after much experience and many trials. Dante was fifty-six years old at the time of his death, when the mask was taken; the portrait by Giotto represents him as not much past twenty. There is an interval of at least thirty years beween the two. And what years they had been for him!

The interest of this comparison lies not only in the mutual support which the portraits afford each other, in the assurance each gives that the other is genuine, but also in their joint illustration of the life and character of Dante. As Giotto painted him, he is the lover of Beatrice, the gay companion of princes, the friend of poets, and himself already the most famous writer of love verses in Italy. There is an al-

FROM THE DEATH MASK IN THE BARGELLO IN FLORENCE

RAPHAEL DETAIL FROM THE "DISPUTA" IN THE VATICAN ROME

FROM THE FRESCO BY GIOTTO DE BORDONE

most feminine softness in the lines of the face, with a sweet and serious tenderness well befitting the lover, and the author of the sonnets and canzoni which were in a few years to be gathered into the incomparable record of his *New Life*. It is the face of Dante in the May-time of youthful hope, in that serene season of promise and of joy, which was so soon to reach its foreordained close in the death of her who had made life new and beautiful for him, and to the love and honor of whom he dedicated his soul and gave all his future years. It is the same face with that of the mask; but the one is the face of a youth, "with all triumphant splendor on his brow," the other of a man, burdened with "the dust and injury of age." The forms and features are alike, but as to the later face,

"That time of year thou mayst in it behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs, which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."

The face of the youth is grave, as with the shadow of distant sorrow; the face of the man is solemn, as of one who had gone

"Per tutti i cerchj del dolente regno."

The one is the young poet of Florence, the other the supreme poet of the world,—

"che al divino dall' umano,
All' eterno dal tempo era venuto."

BOCCACCIO'S ACCOUNT OF THE COMMEDIA

Balbo, Life of Dante. Tr. by Mrs. Bunbury, II. 61, 269, 290.

It should be known that Dante had a sister who was married to one of our citizens, called Leon Poggi, by whom she had several children. Among these was one called Andrew, who wonderfully resembled Dante in the outline of his features, and in his height and figure; and he also walked rather stooping, as Dante is said to have done. He was a weak man, but with naturally good feelings, and his language and conduct were regular and praiseworthy. And I having become intimate with him, he often spoke to me of Dante's habits and ways; but among those things which I delight most in recollecting, is what he told me relating to that of which we are now speaking. He said then, that Dante belonged to the party of Messer Vieri de' Cerchi, and was one of its great leaders; and when Messer Vieri and many of his followers left Florence, Dante left that city also and went to Verona. And on account of this departure, through the solicitation of the opposite party, Messer Vieri, and all who had left Florence, especially the principal persons, were considered as rebels, and had their persons condemned and

their property confiscated. When the people heard this, they ran to the houses of those proscribed, and plundered all that was within them. It is true that Dante's wife, Madonna Gemma, fearing this, and by the advice of some of her friends and relations, had withdrawn from his house some chests containing certain precious things, and Dante's writings along with them, and had put them in a place of safety. And not satisfied with having plundered the houses of the proscribed, the most powerful partisans of the opposite faction occupied their possessions,—some taking one and some another,—and thus Dante's house was occupied.

But after five years or more had elapsed, and the city was more rationally governed, it is said, than it was when Dante was sentenced, persons began to question their rights, on different grounds, to what had been the property of the exiles, and they were heard. Therefore Madonna Gemma was advised to demand back Dante's property, on the ground that it was her dowry. She, to prepare this business, required certain writings and documents which were in one of the chests, which, in the violent plunder of the effects, she had sent away, nor had she ever since removed them from the place where she had deposited them. For this purpose, this Andrew said, she had sent for him, and as Dante's nephew had entrusted him with the keys of these

chests, and had sent him with a lawyer to search for the required papers; while the lawyer searched for these, he, Andrew, among other of Dante's writings, found many sonnets, canzoni, and such similar pieces. But among them what pleased him the most was a sheet in which, in Dante's handwriting, the seven preceding cantos were written; and therefore he took it and carried it off with him, and read it over and over again; and although he understood but little of it, still it appeared to him a very fine thing; and therefore he determined, in order to know what it was, to carry it to an esteemed man of our city, who in those times was a much celebrated reciter of verses, whose name was Dino, the son of Messer Lambertuccio Frescobaldi.

It pleased Dino marvellously; and having made copies of it for several of his friends, and knowing that the composition was merely begun, and not completed, he thought that it would be best to send it to Dante, and at the same time to beg him to follow up his design, and to finish it; and having inquired, and ascertained that Dante was at this time in the Lunigiana, with a noble man of the family of Malaspina, called the Marquis Moroello, who was a man of understanding, and who had a singular friendship for him, he thought of sending it, not to Dante himself, but to the Marquis, in order that he should show it to him: and so Dino did, begging him that, as

far as it lay in his power, he would exert his good offices to induce Dante to continue and finish his work.

The seven aforesaid cantos having reached the Marquis's hands, and having marvellously pleased him, he showed them to Dante; and having heard from him that they were his composition, he entreated him to continue the work. To this it is said that Dante answered: "I really supposed that these, along with many of my other writings and effects, were lost when my house was plundered, and therefore I had given up all thoughts of them. But since it has pleased God that they should not be lost, and he has thus restored them to me, I shall endeavor, as far as I am able, to proceed with them according to my first design." And recalling his old thoughts, and resuming his interrupted work, he speaks thus in the beginning of the eighth canto: "My wondrous history I here renew."

Now precisely the same story, almost without any alteration, has been related to me by a Ser Dino Perino, one of our citizens and an intelligent man, who, according to his own account, had been on the most friendly and familiar terms with Dante; but he so far alters the story, that he says, "It was not Andrea Leoni, but I myself, who was sent by the lady to the chests for the papers, and that found these seven cantos and took them to Dino, the son of Messer Lamber-

tuccio." I do not know to which of these I ought to give most credit, but whichever of them spoke the truth, still a doubt occurs to me in what they say, which I cannot in any manner solve to my satisfaction; and my doubt is this. The poet introduces Ciacco into the sixth canto, and makes him prophesy, that before three years had elapsed from the moment he was speaking, the party to which Dante belonged should fall, and so it happened. But we know the removal of the Bianchi from office, and their departure from Florence, all happened at once; and therefore, if the author departed at that time, how could he have written this,—and not only this, but another canto after it? . . .

And those friends he left behind him, his sons and his disciples, having searched at many times and for several months everything of his writing, to see whether he had left any conclusion to his work, could find in nowise any of the remaining cantos; his friends generally being much mortified that God had not at least lent him so long to the world, that he might have been able to complete the small remaining part of his work; and having sought so long and never found it, they remained in despair. Jacopo and Piero were sons of Dante, and each of them being rhymers, they were induced by the persuasions of their friends to endeavor to complete, as far as they were able, their father's work, in order that it should not re-

main imperfect; when to Jacopo, who was more eager about it than his brother, there appeared a wonderful vision, which not only induced him to abandon such presumptuous folly, but showed him where the thirteen cantos were which were wanting to the *Divina Commedia,* and which they had not been able to find. . . .

A worthy man of Ravenna, whose name was Pier Giardino, and who had long been Dante's disciple, grave in his manner and worthy of credit, relates that, after the eighth month from the day of his master's death, there came to his house before dawn Jacopo di Dante, who told him that that night, while he was asleep, his father Dante had appeared to him, clothed in the whitest garments, and his face resplendent with an extraordinary light; that he, Jacopo, asked him if he lived, and that Dante replied: "Yes, but in the true life, not our life." Then he, Jacopo, asked him if he had completed his work before passing into the true life, and, if he had done so, what had become of that part of it which was missing, which they none of them had been able to find. To this Dante seemed to answer, "Yes, I finished it"; and then took him, Jacopo, by the hand, and led him into that chamber in which he, Dante, had been accustomed to sleep when he lived in this life, and, touching one of the walls, he said, "What you have sought for so much, is here"; and at these words both Dante

and sleep fled from Jacopo at once. For which reason Jacopo said he could not rest without coming to explain what he had seen to Pier Giardino, in order that they should go together and search out the place thus pointed out to him, which he had retained excellently in his memory, and to see whether this had been pointed out by a true spirit, or a false delusion. For which purpose, although it was still far in the night, they set off together, and went to the house in which Dante resided at the time of his death. Having called up its present owner, he admitted them, and they went to the place thus pointed out; there they found a blind fixed to the wall, as they had always been used to see it in past days; they lifted it gently up, when they found a little window in the wall, never before seen by any of them, nor did they even know it was there. In it they found several writings, all mouldy from the dampness of the walls, and had they remained there longer, in a little while they would have crumbled away. Having thoroughly cleared away the mould, they found them to be the thirteen cantos that had been wanting to complete the *Commedia.*

THE POSTHUMOUS DANTE

By J. R. Lowell in the American Cyclopædia, Art. *Dante.*

Looked at outwardly, the life of Dante seems to have been an utter and disastrous failure. What its inward satisfaction must have been, we, with the *Paradiso* open before us, can form some faint conception. To him, longing with an intensity which only the word *Dantesque* will express to realize an ideal upon earth, and continually baffled and misunderstood, the far greater part of his mature life must have been labor and sorrow. We can see how essential all that sad experience was to him, can understand why all the fairy stories hide the luck in the ugly black casket; but to him, then and there, how seemed it?

> Thou shalt relinquish everything of thee
> Beloved most dearly; this that arrow is
> Shot from the bow of exile first of all;
> And thou shalt prove how salt a savor hath
> The bread of others, and how hard a path
> To climb and to descend the stranger's stairs!
>
> *Parad.* xvii.

Come sa di sale! Who never wet his bread with tears, says Goethe, knows ye not, ye heavenly powers! Our nineteenth century made an idol of the noble lord who broke his heart in verse once every six months, but the fourteenth was lucky enough to produce and not to make an idol

of that rarest earthly phenomenon, a man of genius who could hold heart-break at bay for twenty years, and would not let himself die till he had done his task. At the end of the *Vita Nuova*, his first work, Dante wrote down that remarkable aspiration that God would take him to himself after he had written of Beatrice such things as were never yet written of woman. It was literally fulfilled when the *Commedia* was finished, twenty-five years later. Scarce was Dante at rest in his grave when Italy felt instinctively that this was her great man. Boccaccio tells us that in 1329 Cardinal Poggetto (du Poiet) caused Dante's treatise *De Monarchiâ* to be publicly burned at Bologna, and proposed further to dig up and burn the bones of the poet at Ravenna, as having been a heretic; but so much opposition was roused that he thought better of it. Yet this was during the pontificate of the Frenchman, John XXII., the reproof of whose simony Dante puts into the mouth of St. Peter, who declares his seat vacant (*Parad.* xxvii.), whose damnation the poet himself seems to prophesy (*Inf.* xi.), and against whose election he had endeavored to persuade the cardinals, in a vehement letter. In 1350 the republic of Florence voted the sum of ten golden florins to be paid by the hands of Messer Giovanni Boccaccio to Dante's daughter Beatrice, a nun in the convent of Santa Chiara at Ravenna. In 1396 Florence voted a monu-

ment, and begged in vain for the metaphorical ashes of the man of whom she had threatened to make literal cinders if she could catch him alive. In 1429 she begged again, but Ravenna, a dead city, was tenacious of the dead poet. In 1519 Michael Angelo would have built the monument, but Leo X. refused to allow the sacred dust to be removed. Finally, in 1829, five hundred and eight years after the death of Dante, Florence got a cenotaph fairly built in Santa Croce (by Ricci), ugly beyond even the usual lot of such, with three colossal figures on it, Dante in the middle, with Italy on one side and Poesy on the other. The tomb at Ravenna, built originally in 1483, by Cardinal Bembo, was restored by Cardinal Corsi in 1692, and finally rebuilt in its present form by Cardinal Gonzaga, in 1780, all three of whom commemorated themselves in Latin inscriptions. It is a little shrine covered with a dome, not unlike the tomb of a Mohammedan saint, and is now the chief magnet which draws foreigners and their gold to Ravenna. The *valet de place* says that Dante is not buried under it, but beneath the pavement of the street in front of it, where also, he says, he saw my Lord Byron kneel and weep. Like everything in Ravenna, it is dirty and neglected. In 1373 (Aug. 9) Florence instituted a chair of the *Divina Commedia,* and Boccaccio was named first professor. He accordingly began his lectures on Sunday, Oct.

3, following, but his comment was broken off abruptly at the seventeenth verse of the seventeenth canto of the *Inferno,* by the illness which ended in his death, Dec. 21, 1375. Among his successors was Filippo Villani and Filelfo. Bologna was the first to follow the example of Florence, Benvenuto da Imola having begun his lectures, according to Tiraboschi, as early as 1375. Chairs were established also at Pisa, Venice, Piacenza, and Milan before the close of the century. The lectures were delivered in the churches and on feast days, which shows their popular character. Balbo reckons (but that is guesswork) that the manuscript copies of the *Divina Commedia* made during the fourteenth century, and now existing in the libraries of Europe, are more numerous than those of all other works, ancient and modern, made during the same period. Between the invention of printing and the year 1500, more than twenty editions were published in Italy, the earliest in 1472. During the sixteenth century there were forty editions; during the seventeenth, a period, for Italy, of sceptical dilettantism, only three; during the eighteenth, thirty-four; and already, during the first half of the nineteenth, at least eighty. The first translation was into Spanish, in 1428. M. St. René Taillandier says that the *Commedia* was condemned by the Inquisition in Spain, but this seems too general a statement, for, according to Foscolo ("Dante,"

Vol. IV. p. 116), it was the commentary of Landino and Vellutello, and a few verses in the *Inferno* and *Paradiso,* which were condemned. The first French translation was that of Grangier, 1596, but the study of Dante struck no root there till the present century. Rivarol, who translated the *Inferno* in 1783, was the first Frenchman who divined the wonderful force and vitality of the *Commedia.* The expressions of Voltaire represent very well the average opinion of cultivated persons in respect of Dante in the middle of the eighteenth century. He says: "The Italians call him divine; but it is a hidden divinity; few people understand his oracles. He has commentators, which, perhaps, is another reason for his not being understood. His reputation will go on increasing, because scarce anybody reads him." (*Dict. Phil.,* art. "Dante.") To Father Bettinelli he writes: "I estimate highly the courage with which you have dared to say that Dante was a madman and his work a monster." But he adds, what shows that Dante had his admirers even in that flippant century: "There are found among us, and in the eighteenth century, people who strive to admire imaginations so stupidly extravagant and barbarous." (*Corresp. gén., Œuvres,* Tom. LVII. pp. 80, 81.) Elsewhere he says that the *Commedia* was "an odd poem, but gleaming with natural beauties, a work in

which the author rose in parts above the bad taste of his age and his subject, and full of passages written as purely as if they had been of the time of Ariosto and Tasso." (*Essai sur les Mœurs, Œuvres,* Tom. XVII. pp. 371, 372.) It is curious to see this antipathetic fascination which Dante exercised over a nature so opposite to his own. At the beginning of this century Châteaubriand speaks of Dante with vague commendation, evidently from a very superficial acquaintance, and that only with the *Inferno,* probably from Rivarol's version. Since then there have been four or five French versions in prose or verse, including one by Lamennais. But the austerity of Dante will not condescend to the conventional elegance which makes the charm of French, and the most virile of poets cannot be adequately rendered in the most feminine of languages. Yet in the works of Fauriel, Ozanam, Ampère, and Villemain, France has given a greater impulse to the study of Dante than any other country except Germany. Into Germany the *Commedia* penetrated later. How utterly Dante was unknown there in the sixteenth century is plain from a passage in the "Vanity of the Arts and Sciences" of Cornelius Agrippa, where he is spoken of among the authors of lascivious stories: "There have been many of these historical pandars, of which some of obscure fame, as Æneas Sylvius, Dantes, and Pe-

trarch, Boccace, Pontanus," etc. The first German translation was that of Kannegiesser (1809). Versions by Streckfuss, Kopisch, and Prince John (now king) of Saxony followed. Goethe seems never to have given that attention to Dante which his ever-alert intelligence might have been expected to bestow on so imposing a moral and æsthetic phenomenon. Unless the conclusion of the second part of "Faust" be an inspiration of the *Paradiso,* we remember no adequate word from him on this theme. His remarks on one of the German translations are brief, dry, and without that breadth which comes only of thorough knowledge and sympathy. But German scholarship and constructive criticism, through Witte, Kopisch, Wegele, Ruth, and others, have been of pre-eminent service in deepening the understanding and facilitating the study of the poet. In England, the first recognition of Dante is by Chaucer in the "Hugelin of Pisa" of the "Monkes Tale," and an imitation of the opening verses of the third canto of the *Inferno* ("Assembly of Foules"). In 1417 Giovanni da Serravalle, Bishop of Fermo, completed a Latin prose translation of the *Commedia,* a copy of which, as he made it at the request of two English bishops whom he met at the Council of Constance, was doubtless sent to England. Later we find Dante now and then mentioned, but evidently from hearsay only, till the time of

Milton, who shows that he has read his works closely. Thenceforward for more than a century Dante became a mere name, used without meaning by literary sciolists. Lord Chesterfield echoes Voltaire, and Dr. Drake in his "Literary Hours" could speak of Darwin's "Botanic Garden" as showing the "wild and terrible sublimity of Dante"! The first complete English translation was by Boyd, of the *Inferno*, 1785, of the whole poem, 1802. There have been six other complete translations, beginning with Cary's in 1814, four since 1850, beside several of the *Inferno* singly. It is only within the last twenty years, however, that the study of Dante, in any true sense, became at all general. Even Coleridge seems to have been familiar only with the *Inferno*.

THE SCHOLASTIC PHILOSOPHY

From Milman's History of Latin Christianity, Book XIV. Ch. III.

Now came the great age of the Schoolmen. Latin Christianity raised up those vast monuments of Theology which amaze and appall the mind with the enormous accumulation of intellectual industry, ingenuity, and toil; but of which the sole result to posterity is this barren amazement. The tomes of Scholastic Divinity may be

compared with the Pyramids of Egypt, which stand in that rude majesty which is commanding from the display of immense human power, yet oppressive from the sense of the waste of that power for no discoverable use. Whoever penetrates within finds himself bewildered and lost in a labyrinth of small, dark, intricate passages and chambers, devoid of grandeur, devoid of solemnity: he may wander without end, and find nothing! It was not indeed the enforced labor of a slave population: it was rather voluntary slavery, submitting in its intellectual ambition and its religious patience to monastic discipline: it was the work of a small intellectual oligarchy, monks, of necessity, in mind and habits; for it imperiously required absolute seclusion either in the monastery or in the university, a long life under monastic rule. No Schoolman could be a great man but as a Schoolman. William of Ockham alone was a powerful demagogue,—scholastic even in his political writings, but still a demagogue. It is singular to see every kingdom in Latin Christendom, every order in the social state, furnishing the great men, not merely to the successive lines of Doctors, who assumed the splendid titles of the Angelical, the Seraphic, the Irrefragable, the most Profound, the most Subtile, the Invincible, even the Perspicuous, but to what may be called the supreme Pentarchy of Scholasticism. Italy sent Thomas of Aquino and Bonaventura;

Germany, Albert the Great; the British Isles (they boasted also of Alexander Hales and Bradwardine) Duns Scotus and William of Ockham; France alone must content herself with names somewhat inferior (she had already given Abélard, Gilbert de la Porée, Amauri de Bene, and other famous or suspected names), now William of Auvergne, at a later time Durandus. Albert and Aquinas were of noble houses, the Counts of Bollstadt and Aquino; Bonaventura of good parentage at Fidenza; of Scotus the birth was so obscure as to be untraceable; Ockham was of humble parents in the village of that name in Surrey. But France may boast that the University of Paris was the great scene of their studies, their labors, their instruction: the University of Paris was the acknowledged awarder of the fame and authority obtained by the highest Schoolmen. It is no less remarkable that the new Mendicant Orders sent forth these five Patriarchs, in dignity, of the science. Albert and Aquinas were Dominicans; Bonaventura, Duns Scotus, Ockham, Franciscans. It might have been supposed that the popularizing of religious teaching, which was the express and avowed object of the Friar Preachers and of the Minorites, would have left the higher places of abstruse and learned Theology to the older Orders, or to the more dignified secular ecclesiastics. Content with being the vigorous antagonists of heresy in all quarters, they

would not aspire also to become the aristocracy of theologic erudition. But the dominant religious impulse of the times could not but seize on all the fervent and powerful minds which sought satisfaction for their devout yearnings. No one who had strong religious ambition could be anything but a Dominican or a Franciscan; to be less was to be below the highest standard. Hence on one hand the Orders aspired to rule the Universities, contested the supremacy with all the great established authorities in the schools; and having already drawn into their vortex almost all who united powerful abilities with a devotional temperament, never wanted men who could enter into this dreary but highly rewarding service,—men who could rule the schools, as others of their brethren had begun to rule the Councils and the minds of kings. It may be strange to contrast the popular simple preaching—for such must have been that of St. Dominic and St. Francis, such that of their followers, in order to contend with success against the plain and austere sermons of the heretics—with the Sum of Theology of Aquinas, which of itself (and it is but one volume in the works of Thomas) would, as it might seem, occupy a whole life of the most secluded study to write, almost to read. The unlearned, unreasoning, only profoundly passionately loving and dreaming St. Francis, is still more oppugnant to the intensely subtile and dry

Duns Scotus, at one time carried by his severe logic into Pelagianism; or to William of Ockham, perhaps the hardest and severest intellectualist of all,—a political fanatic, not like his visionary brethren, who brooded over the Apocalypse and their own prophets, but for the Imperial against the Papal sovereignty.

As then in these five men culminates the age of genuine Scholasticism, the rest may be left to be designated and described to posterity by the names assigned to them by their own wondering disciples.

We would change, according to our notion, the titles which discriminated this distinguished pentarchy. Albert the Great would be the Philosopher, Aquinas the Theologian, Bonaventura the Mystic, Duns Scotus the Dialectician, Ockham the Politician. It may be said of Scholasticism, as a whole, that whoever takes delight in what may be called gymnastic exercises of the reason or the reasoning powers, efforts which never had, and hardly cared to have, any bearing on the life, or even on the sentiments and opinions of mankind, may study these works, the crowning effort of Latin, of Sacerdotal, and Monastic Christianity, and may acquire something like respect for these forgotten athletes in the intellectual games of antiquity. They are not of so much moment in the history of religion, for their theology was long before rooted in the veneration and

awe of Christendom; nor in that of philosophy, for except what may be called mythological subtilties, questions relating to the world of angels and spirits, of which, according to them, we might suppose the revelation to man as full and perfect as that of God or of the Redeemer, there is hardly a question which has not been examined in other language and in less dry and syllogistic form. There is no acute observation on the workings of the human mind, no bringing to bear extraordinary facts on the mental, or mingled mental and corporeal, constitution of our being. With all their researches into the unfathomable they have fathomed nothing; with all their vast logical apparatus, they have proved nothing to the satisfaction of the inquisitive mind. Not only have they not solved any of the insoluble problems of our mental being, our primary conceptions, our relations to God, to the Infinite, neither have they (a more possible task) shown them to be insoluble.

HOMER'S ODYSSEY

Book XI. Buckley's Translation.

But when we were come down to the ship and the sea, we first of all drew the ship into the divine sea; and we placed a mast and sails in the black ship. And taking the sheep we put them

on board; and we ourselves also embarked grieving, shedding the warm tear. And fair-haired Circe, an awful goddess, possessing human speech, sent behind our dark-blue-prowed ship a moist wind that filled the sails, an excellent companion. And we sat down, making use of each of the instruments in the ship; and the wind and the pilot directed it. And the sails of it passing over the sea were stretched out the whole day; and the sun set, and all the ways were overshadowed. And it reached the extreme boundaries of the deep-flowing ocean; where are the people and city of the Cimmerians, covered with shadow and vapor, nor does the shining sun behold them with his beams, neither when he goes towards the starry heaven, nor when he turns back again from heaven to earth; but pernicious night is spread over hapless mortals. Having come there, we drew up our ship; and we took out the sheep; and we ourselves went again to the stream of the ocean, until we came to the place which Circe mentioned. There Perimedes and Eurylochus made sacred offerings; but I, drawing my sharp sword from my thigh, dug a trench, the width of a cubit each way; and around it we poured libations to all the dead, first with mixed honey, then with sweet wine, again a third time with water; and I sprinkled white meal over it. And I much besought the unsubstantial heads of the dead, promising that, when I came to Ithaca, I would

offer up in my palace a barren heifer, whichever is the best, and would fill a pyre with excellent things; and that I would sacrifice separately to Tiresias alone a sheep all black, which excels amongst our sheep.

But when I had besought them, the nations of the dead, with vows and prayers, then taking the sheep, I cut off their heads into the trench, and the black blood flowed: and the souls of the perished dead were assembled forth from Erebus, betrothed girls and youths, and much-enduring old men, and tender virgins, having a newly-grieved mind, and many Mars-renowned men wounded with brass-tipped spears, possessing gore-smeared arms, who, in great numbers, were wandering about the trench on different sides with a divine clamor: and pale fear seized upon me. Then at length exhorting my companions, I commanded them, having skinned the sheep which lay there, slain with the cruel brass, to burn them, and to invoke the gods, both Pluto and dread Proserpine. But I, having drawn my sharp sword from my thigh, sat down, nor did I suffer the powerless heads of the dead to draw nigh the blood, before I inquired of Tiresias. And first the soul of my companion Elpenor came; for he was not yet buried beneath the wide-wayed earth; for we left his body in the palace of Circe unwept for and unburied, since another toil then urged us. Beholding him, I wept, and

pitied him in my mind, and addressing him, spoke winged words: "O Elpenor, how didst thou come under the dark west? Thou hast come sooner, being on foot, than I with a black ship."

Thus I spoke; but he, groaning, answered me in discourse, "O Jove-born son of Laertes, much-contriving Ulysses, the evil destiny of the deity and the abundant wine hurt me. Lying down in the palace of Circe, I did not think to go down backwards, having come to the long ladder, but I fell downwards from the roof; and my neck was broken from the vertebræ, and my soul descended to Hades. Now, I entreat thee by those who are left behind, and not present, by thy wife and father, who nurtured thee when little, and Telemachus, whom thou didst leave alone in thy palace; for I know that, going hence from the house of Pluto, thou wilt moor thy well-wrought ship at the island of Ææa: there then, O king, I exhort thee to be mindful of me, nor, when thou departest, leave me behind, unwept for, unburied, going at a distance, lest I should become some cause to thee of the wrath of the gods: but burn me with whatever arms are mine, and build on the shore of the hoary sea a monument for me, a wretched man, to be heard of even by posterity; perform these things for me, and fix upon the tomb the oar with which I rowed whilst alive, being with my companions."

Thus he spoke; but I, answering, addressed

him: "O wretched one, I will perform and do these things for thee."

Thus we sat answering one another with bitter words; I indeed holding my sword off over the blood, but the image of my companion on the other side spoke many things. And afterwards there came on the soul of my deceased mother, Anticlea, daughter of magnanimous Autolycus, whom I left alive, on going to sacred Ilium. I indeed wept beholding her, and pitied her in my mind; but not even thus, although grieving very much, did I suffer her to go forward near to the blood, before I inquired of Tiresias. But at length the soul of Theban Tiresias came on, holding a golden sceptre, but me he knew and addressed: "O Jove-born son of Laertes, why, O wretched one, leaving the light of the sun, hast thou come, that thou mayest see the dead and this joyless region? but go back from the trench, and hold off thy sharp sword, that I may drink the blood and tell thee what is unerring."

Thus he spoke; but I, retiring back, fixed my silver-hilted sword in the sheath; but when he had drunk the black blood, then at length the blameless prophet addressed me with words: "Thou seekest a pleasant return, O illustrious Ulysses; but the deity will render it difficult for thee; for I do not think that thou wilt escape the notice of Neptune, who has set wrath in his mind against thee, enraged because thou hast blinded

his dear son. But still, even so, although suffering ills, thou mayest come, if thou art willing to restrain thy longing, and that of thy companions, when thou shalt first drive thy well-wrought ship to the Trinacrian island, escaping from the azure main, and find the beeves pasturing, and the fat cattle of the sun, who beholds all things, and hears all things; if indeed thou shalt leave these unharmed, and art careful of thy return, even then thou mayest come to Ithaca, although suffering ills: but if thou harmest them, then I foretell to thee destruction for thy ship and thy companions; but even if thou shouldst thyself escape, thou wilt return late, in calamity, having lost all thy companions, in a foreign ship; and thou wilt find troubles in thine house, overbearing men, who consume thy livelihood, wooing thy goddess-like wife, and offering thyself for her dowry gifts. But certainly when thou comest thou wilt revenge their violence; but when thou slayest the suitors in thy palace, either by deceit, or openly with sharp brass, then go, taking a well-fitted oar, until thou comest to those men, who are not acquainted with the sea, nor eat food mixed with salt, nor indeed are acquainted with crimson-cheeked ships, nor well-fitted oars, which also are wings to ships. But I will tell thee a very manifest sign, nor will it escape thee: when another traveller, now meeting thee, shall say that thou hast a winnowing-fan on thine illustri-

ous shoulder, then at length having fixed thy well-fitted oar in the earth, and having offered beautiful sacrifices to King Neptune, a ram, and bull, and boar, the mate of swine, return home, and offer up sacred hecatombs to the immortal gods, who possess the wide heaven, to all in order: but death will come upon thee away from the sea, gentle, very much such a one, as will kill thee, taken with gentle old age; and the people around thee will be happy: these things I tell thee true."

Thus he spoke: but I, answering, addressed him: "O Tiresias, the gods themselves have surely decreed these things. But come, tell me this, and relate it truly. I behold this the soul of my deceased mother; she sits near the blood in silence, nor does she dare to look openly at her son, nor to speak to him. Tell me, O king, how she can know me, being such a one."

Thus I spoke; but he, immediately answering, addressed me: "I will tell thee an easy word, and will place it in thy mind; whomever of the deceased dead thou sufferest to come near the blood, he will tell thee the truth; but whomsoever thou grudgest it, he will go back again."

Thus having spoke, the soul of King Tiresias went within the house of Pluto, when he had spoken the oracles: but I remained there firmly, until my mother came and drank of the blood; but she immediately knew me, and, lamenting, addressed to me winged words: "My son, how

didst thou come under the shadowy darkness, being alive? but it is difficult for the living to behold these things; for in the midst there are mighty rivers and terrible streams, first indeed the ocean, which it is not possible to pass, being on foot, except any one having a well-built ship. Dost thou now come here wandering from Troy, with thy ship and companions, after a long time? nor hast thou yet reached Ithaca? nor hast thou seen thy wife in thy palace?"

Thus she spoke; but I, answering, addressed her: "O my mother, necessity led me to Hades, to consult the soul of Theban Tiresias. For I have not yet come near Achaia, nor have I ever stept upon my own land, but I still wander about, having grief, since first I followed divine Agamemnon to steed-excelling Ilium, that I might fight with the Trojans. But come, tell me this, and relate it truly, what fate of long-sleeping death subdued thee? Whether a long disease? or did shaft-rejoicing Diana, coming upon thee with her mild weapons, slay thee? And tell me of my father and my son, whom I left, whether my property is still with them, or does some other men now possess it, and do they think that I shall not any more return? And tell me the counsel and mind of my wooed wife, whether does she remain with her son, and guard all things safe? or now has one of the Grecians, whoever is the best, wedded her?"

Thus I spoke; but my venerable mother immediately answered me: "She by all means remains with an enduring mind in thy palace: and her miserable nights and days are continually spent in tears. But no one as yet possesses thy noble property: but Telemachus manages thy estates in quiet, and feasts upon equal feasts, which it is fit for a man who is a prince to prepare; for all invite him: but thy father remains there in the country, nor does he come to the city; nor has he beds, and couches, and clothes, and variegated rugs. But he sleeps indeed, during the winter, where the servants sleep, in the house, in the dust, near the fire, and he puts sad garments about his body: but when summer arrives, and flourishing autumn, his bed is strewn on the ground, of the leaves that fall on every side of his wine-producing vineyard. Here he lies sorrowing, and he cherishes great grief in his mind, lamenting thy fate; and severe old age comes upon him: for so I also perished and drew on my fate. Nor did the well-aiming, shaft-delighting goddess, coming upon me with her mild weapons, slay me in the palace. Nor did any disease come upon me, which especially takes away the mind from the limbs with hateful consumption. But regret for thee, and cares for thee, O illustrious Ulysses, and kindness for thee, deprived me of my sweet life."

Thus she spoke: but I, meditating in my mind,

wished to lay hold of the soul of my departed mother. Thrice indeed I essayed it, and my mind urged me to lay hold of it, but thrice it flew from my hands, like unto a shadow, or even to a dream: but sharp grief arose in my heart still more; and addressing her, I spoke winged words: "Mother mine, why dost thou not remain for me, desirous to take hold of thee, that even in Hades, throwing around our dear hands, we may both be satiated with sad grief? Has illustrious Proserpine sent forth this an image for me, that I may lament still more, mourning?"

Thus I spoke; my venerable mother immediately answered me: "Alas! my son, unhappy above all mortals, Proserpine, the daughter of Jove, by no means deceives thee, but this is the condition of mortals, when they are dead. For their nerves no longer have flesh and bones, but the strong force of burning fire subdues them, when first the mind leaves the white bones, but the soul, like as a dream, flittering, flies away. But hasten as quick as possible to the light; and know all these things, that even hereafter thou mayest tell them to thy wife."

Thus we twain answered each other with words; but the women came,—for illustrious Proserpine excited them,—as many as were the wives and daughters of chiefs. And they were assembled together around the black blood. And I took counsel how I might inquire of each; and

this plan in my mind appeared to me to be the best: having drawn my long sword from my stout thigh, I did not suffer them all to drink the black blood at the same time. But they came one after another, and each related her race; but I inquired of all. There then I saw Tyro first, born of a noble father, who said that she was the offspring of blameless Salmoneus. And she said that she was the wife of Cretheus, son of Æolus. She loved the divine river Enipeus, which flows far the fairest of rivers upon the earth; and she was constantly walking near the beautiful streams of the Enipeus. Earth-shaking Neptune, therefore, likened unto him, lay with her at the mouth of the eddying river: and the purple wave surrounded them, like unto a mountain, arched, and concealed the god, and the mortal woman; and he loosed her virgin zone, and shed sleep over her. But when the god had accomplished the deeds of love, he laid hold of her hand, and spoke and addressed her: "Rejoice, O woman, on account of our love; for when a year has rolled round, thou shalt bring forth illustrious children; since the beds of the immortals are not in vain; but do thou take care of them, and bring them up, but now go to thine house, and restrain thyself, nor mention it; but I am Earth-shaking Neptune."

Thus having spoke, he dived beneath the billowy sea; but she, having conceived, brought

forth Pelias and Neleus, who both became noble servants of Jove. Pelias, indeed, abounding in cattle, dwelt in spacious Iolcus; but the other in sandy Pylos. And the queen of women brought forth the others to Cretheus, Æson, and Pheres, and steed-rejoicing Amithaon.

After her I beheld Antiope, the daughter of Asopus, who also boasted to have slept in the arms of Jove; and she brought forth two sons, Amphion and Zethus, who first laid the foundations of seven-gated Thebes, and surrounded it with turrets; since they were not able, although they were strong, to dwell in spacious Thebes with turrets.

After her I beheld Alcmene, the wife of Amphitryon, who, mingled in the arms of great Jove, brought forth bold, lion-hearted Hercules. And Megara, daughter of high-minded Creon, whom the son of Amphitryon, ever unwasted in strength, wedded.

And I beheld the mother of Œdipus, beautiful Epicaste, who committed a dreadful deed in the ignorance of her mind, having married her own son; and he, having slain his father, married her: but the gods immediately made it public amongst men. Then he, suffering grief in delightful Thebes, ruled over the Cadmeians, through the pernicious counsels of the gods; but she went to the dwellings of strong-gated Hades, suspending the cord on high from the lofty house, held fast

by her own sorrow; but she left behind for him very many griefs, as many as the Furies of a mother accomplish.

And I saw the very beautiful Chloris, whom Neleus once married, on account of her beauty, when he had given her countless dowries, the youngest daughter of Amphion, son of Iasus: who once ruled strongly in Minyean Orchomenus; and he reigned over Pylos; and she bore to him noble children, Nestor, and Chromius, and proud Periclymenus; and besides these she brought forth strong Pero, a marvel to mortals, whom all the neighboring inhabitants wooed; nor did Neleus at all offer her to any one, who could not drive away from Phylace the crumple-horned oxen of mighty Iphicles, with wide foreheads, and troublesome; a blameless seer alone promised that he would drive these away; but the severe Fate of the gods hindered him, and difficult fetters, and rustic herdsmen. But when the months and days were now completed, a year having again gone round, and the hours came on, then at length the mighty Iphicles loosed him, having told all the oracles; and the counsel of Jove was fulfilled.

And I beheld Leda, the wife of Tyndareus, who brought forth two noble-minded sons from Tyndareus, steed-subduing Castor, and Pollux who excelled in pugilism; both of these the fruitful earth detains alive; who, even beneath the earth, having honor from Jove, sometimes live

on alternate days, and sometimes again are dead, and they have obtained by lot honor equally with the gods.

After her I beheld Iphimedia, wife of Aloëus, who said that she had been united to Neptune: and bore two sons, but they were short-lived, god-like Otus, and far-famed Ephialtes; whom the fruitful earth nourished, the tallest, and far the most beautiful, at least after illustrious Orion. For at nine years old they were also nine cubits in width, but in height they were nine fathoms. Who even threatened the immortals that they would set up a strife of impetuous war in Olympus; they attempted to place Ossa upon Olympus, and upon Ossa leafy Pelion, that heaven might be accessible. And they would have accomplished it, if they had reached the measure of youth: but the son of Jove, whom fair-haired Latona bore, destroyed them both, before the down flowered under their temples and thickened upon their cheek with a flowering beard.

And I beheld Phædra and Procris, and fair Ariadne, the daughter of wise Minos, whom Theseus once led from Crete to the soil of sacred Athens, but he did not enjoy her; for Diana first slew her in the island Dia, on account of the testimony of Bacchus.

And I beheld Mæra and Clymene, and hateful Eriphyle, who received precious gold for her dear husband. But I cannot relate nor name all,

how many wives and daughters of heroes I beheld: for even the immortal night would first waste away.

. . . . .

When chaste Proserpine had dispersed the souls of women in different places, the soul of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, came up, sorrowing: and the rest were assembled around him, as many as died, and drew on their fate in the house of Ægisthus together with him; and he immediately knew me, when he had drunk the black blood; and he wept shrilly, shedding the warm tear, holding out his hands to me, desiring to lay hold of me. But he had no longer firm strength, nor power at all, such as was before in his bending limbs. I wept indeed, beholding him, and pitied him in my mind, and addressing him I spoke winged words: "O most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, what fate of long-sleeping death subdued thee? Did Neptune subdue thee in thy ships, raising an immense blast of cruel winds? Or did unjust men injure thee on land, while thou wert cutting off their oxen, and beautiful flocks of sheep, or contending for a city, or for women?"

Thus I spoke; but he immediately addressed me, answering: "O Jove-born son of Laertes, much-planning Ulysses, neither did Neptune subdue me in my ships, raising an immense blast of cruel winds, nor did unjust men injure me on

land; but Ægisthus, having contrived death and Fate for me, slew me, conspiring with my pernicious wife, having invited me to his house, entertaining me at a feast, as any one has slain an ox at the stall. Thus I died by a most piteous death; and my other companions were cruelly slain around me, as swine with white tusks, which are slain either at the marriage, or collation, or splendid banquet of a wealthy, very powerful man. Thou hast already been present at the slaughter of many men, slain separately, and in hard battle; but if thou hadst seen those things, thou wouldst have especially lamented in thy mind, how we lay in the palace about the cups and full tables; and the whole ground reeked with blood. And I heard the most piteous voice of the daughter of Priam, Cassandra, whom deceitful Clytemnestra slew near me; but I, raising my hands from the earth, dying, laid them on my sword; but she, impudent one, went away, nor did she endure to close my eyes with her hands, and shut my mouth, although I was going to Hades. So there is nothing else more terrible and impudent than a woman, who indeed casts about such deeds in her mind: what an unseemly deed has she indeed contrived, having prepared murder for her husband, whom she lawfully married! I thought indeed that I should return home welcome to my children and my servants; but she, above all acquainted with

wicked things, has shed disgrace over herself, and female women about to be hereafter, even upon one who is a worker of good."

Thus he spoke; but I addressed him, answering: "O gods! of a truth wide-thundering Jove most terribly hates the race of Atreus, on account of women's plans, from the beginning: many of us indeed perished for the sake of Helen; and Clytemnestra has contrived a stratagem for thee when thou wast at a distance."

Thus I spoke; but he immediately addressed me in answer; "Now therefore do not thou ever be mild to thy wife, nor inform her of everything with which thou art well acquainted: but tell one thing, and let another be concealed. But for thee indeed there will not be murder at the hands of thy wife, O Ulysses: for prudent Penelope, the daughter of Icarus, is very wise, and is well acquainted with counsels in her mind. We left indeed her, when we came to the war, a young bride; and she had an infant boy at her breast, who now probably sits amongst the number of men, happy one; for his dear father will surely behold him, when returning, and he will embrace his sire, as is right; but she my wife did not suffer me to be satiated in mine eyes with my son, for she first slew even me myself. But I will tell thee something else, and do thou lay it up in thy mind; hold thy ship towards thy dear paternal land secretly, not openly; since confidence is

no longer to be placed upon women. But come, tell me this and relate it truly; if thou hearest of my son anywhere yet alive, either somewhere in Orchomenus, or in sandy Pylos, or somewhere near Menelaus in wide Sparta? for divine Orestes has not yet died upon the earth."

Thus he spoke; but I addressed him in answer: "O son of Atreus, why dost thou inquire these things of me? I do not know at all whether he is alive or dead; and it is wrong to utter vain words."

We twain stood thus mourning, answering one another with sad words, shedding the warm tear. And the soul of Achilles, son of Peleus, came on, and of Patroclus, and spotless Antilochus, and Ajax, who was the most excellent as to his form and person of all the Danaans after the blameless son of Peleus. And the soul of the swift-footed descendant of Æacus knew me, and, lamenting, addressed me in winged words: "O Jove-born son of Laertes, much-contriving Ulysses, wretched one, why dost thou meditate a still greater work in thy mind? how didst thou dare to descend to Orcus, where dwell the witless dead, the images of deceased mortals?"

Thus he spoke; but I addressed him in answer: "Achilles, son of Peleus, by far the most excellent of the Grecians, I came for the advice of Tiresias, if he could tell me how by any plan I may come to craggy Ithaca. For I have not yet

come anywhere near Greece, nor have I ever gone on my land anywhere, but I still have troubles: but there was no man before more blessed than thou, O Achilles, nor will there be hereafter. For formerly we Argives honored thee when alive equally with the gods, and now again, when thou art here, thou hast great power amongst the deceased; do not therefore when dead be sad, O Achilles."

Thus I spoke; but he immediately addressed me in answer: "Do not, O illustrious Ulysses, speak to me of death; I would wish, being on earth, to serve for hire with another man of no estate, who had not much livelihood, rather than rule over all the departed dead. But come, tell me an account of my noble son; did he follow to the war so as to be a chief or not? and tell me if thou hast heard anything of blameless Peleus; whether has he still honor amongst the many Myrmidonians? or do they dishonor him in Greece and Phthia, because old age possesses his hands and feet? for I am not assistant to him under the beams of the sun, being such a one as when I slew the best of the people in wide Troy, fighting for the Grecians. If I should come as such a one even for a short time to the house of my father, so I would make my strength and unconquerable hands terrible to any who treat him with violence and keep him from honor."

Thus he spoke; but I, answering, addressed

him: "I have not indeed heard anything of blameless Peleus. But I will tell thee the whole truth, as thou biddest me, about thy dear son Neoptolemus; for I myself led him in an equal hollow ship from Scyros to the well-grieved Grecians. Of a truth, when we were taking counsels concerning the city of Troy, he always spoke first, and did not err in his words: and godlike Nestor and myself alone contended with him. But when we were fighting about the city of the Trojans, he never remained in the number of men, nor in the crowd, but ran on much before, yielding to no one in his might; and many men he slew in the terrible contest: but I could not tell nor name all, how great a people he slew, defending the Greeks. But I will relate how he slew the hero Eurypylus, son of Telephus, with the brass, and many Cetean companions were slain around him, on account of gifts to a woman: him certainly I beheld as the most beautiful, after divine Memnon. But when we, the chieftains of the Grecians, ascended into the horse which Epeus made, and all things were committed to me, both to open the thick ambush and to shut it, there the other leaders and rulers of the Greeks both wiped away their tears, and the limbs of each trembled under them; but him I never saw at all with my eyes, either turning pale as to his beauteous complexion, or wiping away the tears from his cheeks; but he implored

me very much to go out of the horse; and grasped the hilt of his sword, and his brass-heavy spear, and he meditated evil against the Trojans. But when we had sacked the lofty city of Priam, having his share and excellent reward, he embarked unhurt on a ship, neither stricken with the sharp brass, nor wounded in fighting hand to hand, as oftentimes happens in war; for Mars confusedly raves."

Thus I spoke; but the soul of the swift-footed son of Æacus went away, taking mighty steps through the meadow of asphodel, in joyfulness, because I had said that his son was very illustrious. But the other souls of the deceased dead stood sorrowing, and each related their griefs. But the soul of Ajax, son of Telamon, stood afar off, angry on account of the victory in which I conquered him, contending in trial at the ships concerning the arms of Achilles; for his venerable mother proposed them: but the sons of the Trojans and Pallas Minerva adjudged them. How I wish that I had not conquered in such a contest; for the earth contained such a person on account of them, Ajax, who excelled in form and in deeds the other Greeks, after the blameless son of Peleus; him indeed I addressed with mild words: "O Ajax, son of blameless Telamon, art thou not about, even when dead, to forget thine anger towards me, on account of the destructive arms? for the gods made them a harm unto the

Grecians. For thou, who was such a fortress to them, didst perish; for thee, when dead, we Greeks altogether mourned, equally as for the person of Achilles, the son of Peleus; nor was any one else the cause; but Jupiter vehemently hated the army of the warrior Greeks; and he laid fate upon you. But come hither, O king, that thou mayest hear our word and speech; and subdue thy strength and haughty mind."

Thus I spoke; but he answered me not at all, but went to Erebus amongst the other souls of the deceased dead. There however, although angry, he would have spoken to me, or I to him, but my mind in my breast wished to behold the souls of the other dead.

There then I beheld Minos, the illustrious son of Jove, having a golden sceptre, giving laws to the dead, sitting down; but the others around him, the king, pleaded their causes, sitting and standing through the wide-gated house of Pluto.

After him I beheld vast Orion, hunting beasts at the same time, in the meadow of asphodel, which he had himself killed in the desert mountains, having an all-brazen club in his hands, forever unbroken.

And I beheld Tityus, the son of the very renowned earth, lying on the ground; and he lay stretched over nine acres; and two vultures sitting on each side of him were tearing his liver, diving into the caul: but he did not ward them

off with his hands; for he had dragged Latona, the celebrated wife of Jove, as she was going to Pythos, through the delightful Panopeus.

And I beheld Tantalus suffering severe griefs, standing in a lake; and it approached his chin. But he stood thirsting, and he could not get anything to drink; for as often as the old man stooped, desiring to drink, so often the water, being sucked up, was lost to him; and the black earth appeared around his feet, and the deity dried it up. And lofty trees shed down fruit from the top, pear-trees, and apples, and pomegranates producing glorious fruit, and sweet figs, and flourishing olives: of which, when the old man raised himself up to pluck some with his hands, the wind kept casting them away to the dark clouds.

And I beheld Sisyphus, having violent griefs, bearing an enormous stone with both his hands: he indeed leaning with his hands and feet kept thrusting the stone up to the top: but when it was about to pass over the summit, then strong force began to drive it back again, then the impudent stone rolled to the plain; but he, striving, kept thrusting it back, and the sweat flowed down from his limbs, and a dirt arose from his head.

After him I perceived the might of Hercules, an image; for he himself amongst the immortal gods is delighted with banquets, and has the fair-

legged Hebe, daughter of mighty Jove and golden-sandalled Juno. And around him there was a clang of the dead, as birds, frighted on all sides; but he, like unto dark night, having a naked bow, and an arrow at the string, looking about terribly, was always like unto one about to let fly a shaft. And there was a fearful belt around his breast, the thong was golden: on which wondrous forms were wrought, bears, and wild boars, and terrible lions, and contests, and battles, and slaughters, and slayings of men; he who devised that thong with his art, never having wrought such a one before, could not work any other such. But he immediately knew me, when he saw me with his eyes, and, pitying me, addressed winged words: "O Jove-born son of Laertes, much-contriving Ulysses, ah! wretched one, thou too art certainly pursuing some evil fate, which I also endured under the beams of the sun. I was indeed the son of Jove, the son of Saturn, but I had infinite labor; for I was subjected to a much inferior man, who enjoined upon me difficult contests: and once he sent me hither to bring the dog, for he did not think that there was any contest more difficult than this. I indeed brought it up and led it from Pluto, but Mercury and blue-eyed Minerva escorted me."

Thus having spoken, he went again within the house of Pluto. But I remained there firmly, if by chance any one of the heroes, who perished

in former times, would still come; and I should now still have seen former men, whom I wished, Theseus, and Pirithoüs, glorious children of the gods; but first myriads of nations of the dead were assembled around me with a fine clamor; and pale fear seized me, lest to me illustrious Proserpine should send a Gorgon head of a terrific monster from Orcus. Going then immediately to my ship, I ordered my companions to go on board themselves, and to loose the halsers. But they quickly embarked, and sat down on the benches. And the wave of the stream carried it through the ocean river, first the rowing and afterwards a fair wind.

VIRGIL'S ÆNEID.

Book VI. Davidson's Tr., revised by Buckley.

. . . Ye gods, to whom the empire of ghosts belongs, and ye silent shades, and Chaos, and Phlegethon, places where silence reigns around in night! permit me to utter the secrets I have heard; may I by your divine will disclose things buried in deep earth and darkness. They moved along amid the gloom under the solitary night through the shade, and through the desolate halls and empty realms of Pluto; such as is a journey in woods beneath the unsteady moon, under a faint, glimmering light, when Jupiter hath wrap-

ped the heavens in shade, and sable night had stripped objects of color.

Before the vestibule itself, and in the first jaws of hell, Grief and vengeful Cares have placed their couches, and pale Diseases dwell, and disconsolate Old Age, and Fear, and the evil counsellor Famine, and vile, deformed Indigence, forms ghastly to the sight! and Death, and Toil; then Sleep, akin to Death, and criminal Joys of the mind; and in the opposite threshold murderous War, and the iron bedchambers of the Furies, and frantic Discord, having her viperous locks bound with bloody fillets.

In the midst a gloomy elm displays its boughs and aged arms, which seat vain Dreams are commonly said to haunt, and under every leaf they dwell. Many monstrous savages, moreover, of various forms, stable in the gates, the Centaurs and double-formed Scyllas, and Briareus with his hundred hands, and the enormous snake of Lerma hissing dreadful, and Chimæra armed with flames; Gorgons, Harpies, and the form of Geryon's three-bodied ghost. Here Æneas, disconcerted with sudden fear, grasps his sword, and presents the naked point to each approaching shade: and had not his skilful guide put him in mind that they were airy unbodied phantoms, fluttering about under an empty form, he had rushed in and with his sword struck at the ghosts in vain.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SHADES IN THE NETHER WORLD

Hence is a path which leads to the floods of Tartarean Acheron: here a gulf turbid and impure boils up with mire and vast whirlpools, and disgorges all its sand into Cocytus. A grim ferryman guards these floods and rivers, Charon, of frightful slovenliness; on whose chin a load of gray hair neglected lies; his eyes are flame: his vestments hang from his shoulders by a knot, with filth overgrown. Himself thrusts on the barge with a pole, and tends the sails, and wafts over the bodies in his iron-colored boat, now in years: but the god is of fresh and green old age. Hither the whole tribe in swarms come pouring to the banks, matrons and men, the souls of magnanimous heroes who had gone through life, boys and unmarried maids, and young men who had been stretched on the funeral pile before the eyes of their parents; as numerous as withered leaves fall in the woods with the first cold of autumn, or as numerous as birds flock to the lands from the deep ocean, when the chilling year drives them beyond sea, and sends them to sunny climes. They stood praying to cross the flood the first, and were stretching forth their hands with fond desire to gain the farther bank: but the sullen boatman admits sometimes these, sometimes those; while others to a great distance removed, he debars from the banks.

Æneas (for he was amazed and moved with the tumult) thus speaks: O virgin, say, what

means that flocking to the river? what do the ghosts desire? or by what distinction must these recede from the banks, those sweep with oars the livid flood? To him the aged priestess thus briefly replied: Son of Anchises, undoubted offspring of the gods, you see the deep pools of Cocytus, and the Stygian lake, by whose divinity the gods dread to swear and violate their oath. All that crowd which you see consists of naked and unburied persons; that ferryman is Charon: these, whom the stream carries, are interred; for it is not permitted to transport them over the horrid banks, and hoarse waves, before their bones are quietly lodged in a final abode. They wander a hundred years, and flutter about these shores: then, at length admitted, they visit the wished-for lakes.

The offspring of Anchises paused and repressed his steps, deeply musing, and pitying from his soul their unkind lot. There he espies Leucaspis, and Orontes, the commander of the Lycian fleet, mournful, and bereaved of the honors of the dead: whom as they sailed from Troy, over the stormy seas, the south wind sunk together, whelming both ships and crew in the waves. Lo! the pilot Palinurus slowly advanced, who lately in his Libyan voyage, while he was observing the stars, had fallen from the stern, plunged in the midst of the waves. When with difficulty, by reason of the thick shade, Æneas

knew him in this mournful mood, he thus first accosts him: What god, O Palinurus, snatched you from us, and overwhelmed you in the middle of the ocean? Come, tell me. For Apollo, whom I never before found false, in this one response deceived my mind, declaring that you should be safe on the sea, and arrive at the Ausonian coasts. Is this the amount of his plighted faith?

But he answers: Neither the oracle of Phœbus beguiled you, prince of the line of Anchises, nor a god plunged me in the sea; for, falling headlong, I drew along with me the helm, which I chanced with great violence to tear away, as I clung to it and steered our course, being appointed pilot. By the rough seas I swear that I was not so seriously apprehensive for myself, as that thy ship, despoiled of her rudder, dispossessed of her pilot, might sink while such high billows were rising. The south wind drove me violently on the water over the spacious sea, three wintry nights: on the fourth day I descried Italy from the high ridge of a wave whereon I was raised aloft. I was swimming gradually toward land, and should have been out of danger, had not the cruel people fallen upon me with the sword (encumbered with my wet garment, and grasping with crooked hands the rugged tops of a mountain), and ignorantly taking me for a rich prey. Now the waves possess me, and the

winds toss me about the shore. But by the pleasant light of heaven, and by the vital air, by him who gave thee birth, by the hope of rising Iülus, I thee implore, invincible one, release me from these woes; either throw on me some earth (for thou canst do so), and seek out the Veline port; or, if there be any means, if thy goddess mother point out any, (for thou dost not, I presume, without the will of the gods, attempt to cross such mighty rivers and the Stygian lake,) lend your hand to an unhappy wretch, and bear me with you over the waves, that in death at least I may rest in peaceful seas.

Thus he spoke, when thus the prophetess began: Whence, O Palinurus, rises in thee this so impious desire? Shall you unburied behold the Stygian floods, and the grim river of the Furies, or reach the bank against the command of heaven? Cease to hope that the decrees of the gods are to be altered by prayers; but mindful take these predictions as the solace of your hard fate. For the neighboring people, compelled by portentous plagues from heaven, shall through their several cities far and wide offer atonement to thy ashes, erect a tomb, and stated anniversary offerings on that tomb present; and the place shall forever retain the name of Palinurus. By these words his cares were removed, and grief was for a time banished from his disconsolate heart: he rejoices in the land that is to bear his name.

They therefore accomplish their journey begun, and approach the river: whom when the boatman soon from the Stygian wave beheld advancing through the silent grove, and stepping forward to the bank, thus he first accosts them in words, and chides them unprovoked: Whoever thou mayest be, who art now advancing armed to our rivers, say quick for what end thou comest; and from that very spot repress thy step. This is the region of Ghosts, of Sleep, and drowsy Night: to waft over the bodies of the living in my Stygian boat is not permitted. Nor indeed was it joy to me that I received Alcides on the lake when he came, or Theseus and Pirithous, though they were the offspring of the gods, and invincible in might. One with his hand put the keeper of Tartarus in chains, and dragged him trembling from the throne of our king himself; the others attempted to carry off our queen from Pluto's bedchamber.

In answer to which the Amphrysian prophetess spoke: No such plots are here, be not disturbed; nor do these weapons bring violence: the huge porter may bay in his den forever, terrifying the incorporeal shades: chaste Proserpine may remain in her uncle's palace. Trojan Æneas, illustrious for piety and arms, descends to the deep shades of Erebus to his sire. If the image of such piety makes no impression on you, own a regard at least to this branch (she shows the

branch that was concealed under her robe). Then his heart from swelling rage is stilled: nor passed more words than these. He, with wonder gazing on the hallowed present of the fatal branch, beheld after a long season, turns toward them his lead-colored barge, and approaches the bank. Thence he dislodges the other souls that sat on the long benches, and clears the hatches; at the same time receives into the hold the mighty Æneas. The boat of sewn hide groaned under the weight, and, being leaky, took in much water from the lake. At length he lands the hero and the prophetess safe on the other side of the river, on the foul, slimy strand and sea-green weed. Huge Cerberus makes these realms to resound with barking from his triple jaws, stretched at his enormous length in a den that fronts the gate. To whom the prophetess, seeing his neck now bristle with horrid snakes, flings a soporific cake of honey and medicated grain. He, in the mad rage of hunger, opening his three mouths, snatches the offered morsel, and, spread on the ground, relaxes his monstrous limbs, and is extended at vast length over all the cave. Æneas, now that the keeper of hell is buried in sleep, seizes the passage, and swift overpasses the bank of that flood whence there is no return.

Forthwith are heard voices, loud wailings, and weeping ghosts of infants, in the first opening of the gate: whom, bereaved of sweet life out of

the course of nature, and snatched from the breast, a black day cut off, and buried in an untimely grave.

Next to those are such as had been condemned to death by false accusations. Nor yet were those seats assigned them without a trial, without a judge. Minos, as inquisitor, shakes the urn: he convokes the council of the silent, and examines their lives and crimes.

The next places in order those mournful ones possess who, though free from crime, procured death to themselves with their own hands, and, sick of the light, threw away their lives. How gladly would they now endure poverty and painful toils in the upper regions! Fate opposes, and the hateful lake imprisons them with its dreary waves, and Styx, nine times rolling between, confines them.

Not far from this part, extended on every side, are shown the fields of mourning: so they call them by name. Here by-paths remote conceal, and myrtle-groves cover those around, whom unrelenting love, with his cruel venom, consumed away. Their cares leave them not in death itself. In these places he sees Phædra and Procris, and disconsolate Eriphyle pointing to the wounds she had received from her cruel son; Evadne also, and Pasiphae: these Laodamia accompanies, and Cæneus, once a youth, then a woman, and again by fate transformed into his pristine shape. Among

whom Phœnician Dido, fresh from her wound, was wandering in a spacious wood; whom as soon as the Trojan hero approached, and discovered faintly through the shades, (in like manner as one sees, or thinks he sees, the moon rising through the clouds in the beginning of her monthly course,) he dropped tears, and addressed her in love's sweet accents: Hapless Dido, was it then a true report I had of your being dead, and that you had finished your own destiny by the sword Was I, alas! the cause of your death? I swear by the stars, by the powers above, and by whatever faith may be under the deep earth, that against my will, O queen, I departed from your coast. But the mandates of the gods, which now compel me to travel through these shades, through noisome dreary regions and deep night, drove me from you by their authority; nor could I believe that I should bring upon you such deep anguish by my departure. Stay your steps, and withdraw not yourself from my sight. Whom do you fly? This is the last time fate allows me to address you. With these words Æneas thought to soothe her soul inflamed, and eying him with stern regard, and provoked his tears to flow. She, turned away, kept her eyes fixed on the ground; nor alters her looks more, in consequence of the conversation he had begun, than if she were fixed immovable like a stubborn flint

or rock of Parian marble. At length she abruptly retired, and in detestation fled into a shady grove, where Sichæus, her first lord, answers her with amorous cares, and returns her love for love. Æneas, nevertheless, in commotion for her disastrous fate, with weeping eyes, pursues her far, and pities her as she goes.

Hence he holds on his destined way; and now they had reached the last fields, which by themselves apart renowned warriors frequent. Here Tydeus appears to him, here Parthenopœus illustrious in arms, and the ghost of pale Adrastus. Here appear those Trojans who had died in the field of battle, much lamented in the upper world: whom when he beheld all together in a numerous body, he inwardly groaned; Glaucus, Medon, Thersilochus, the three sons of Antenor, and Polybætes devoted to Ceres, and Idæus still handling his chariot, still his armor. The ghosts in crowds around him stand on the right and left: nor are they satisfied with seeing him once; they wish to detain him long, to come into close conference with him, and learn the reasons of his visit. But as soon as the Grecian chiefs and Agamemnon's battalions saw the hero, and his arms gleaming through the shades, they quaked with dire dismay: some turned their backs, as when they fled once to their ships; some raise their slender voices; the scream begun dies in their gasping throats.

And here he espies Deiphobus, the son of

Priam, mangled in every limb, his face and both his hands cruelly torn, his temples bereft of the ears cropped off, and his nostrils slit with a hideously deformed wound. Thus he hardly knew him, quaking for agitation, and seeking to hide the marks of his dreadful punishment; and he first accosts him with well-known accents: Deiphobus, great in arms, sprung from Teucer's noble blood, who could choose to inflict such cruelties? Or who was allowed to exercise such power over you? To me, in that last night, a report was brought that you, tired with the vast slaughter of the Greeks, had fallen at last on a heap of mingled carcasses. Then, with my own hands, I raised to you an empty tomb on the Rhœtean shore, and thrice with loud voice I invoked your manes. Your name and arms possess the place. Your body, my friend, I could not find, or, at my departure, deposit in your native land. And upon this the son of Priam said: Nothing, my friend, has been omitted by you; you have discharged every duty to Deiphobus, and to the shadow of a corpse. But my own fate, and the cursed wickedness of Helen, plunged me in these woes: she hath left me these monuments of her love. For how we passed that last night amid ill-grounded joys you know, and must remember but too well, when the fatal horse came bounding over our lofty walls, and pregnant brought armed infantry in its womb. She, pretending a dance,

led her train of Phrygian matrons yelling around the orgies: herself in the midst held a large flaming torch, and called to the Greeks from the lofty tower. I, being at that time oppressed with care, and overpowered with sleep, was lodged in my unfortunate bedchamber: rest, balmy, profound, and a perfect image of a calm, peaceful death, pressed me as I lay. Meanwhile my incomparable spouse removes all arms from my palace, and had withdrawn my trusty sword from my head: she calls Menelaus into the palace, and throws open the gates; hoping, no doubt, that would be a mighty favor to her amorous husband, and that thus the infamy of her former wicked deeds might be extinguished. In short, they burst into my chamber: that traitor of the race of Æolus, the promoter of villainy, is joined in company with them. Ye gods, requite these cruelties to the Greeks, if I supplicate vengeance with pious lips! But come now, in your turn, say what adventure hath brought you hither alive. Do you come driven by the casualties of the main, or by the direction of the gods? or what fortune compels you to visit these dreary mansions, troubled regions where the sun never shines?

In this conversation the sun in his rosy chariot had now passed the meridian in his ethereal course; and they perhaps would in this manner have passed the whole time assigned them; but the Sibyl, his companion, put him in mind, and thus

briefly spoke: Æneas, the night comes on apace, while we waste the hours in lamentations. This is the place where the path divides itself in two: the right is what leads beneath great Pluto's wall; by this our way to Elysium lies: but the left carries on the punishments of the wicked, and conveys to cursed Tartarus. On the other hand, Deiphobus said: Be not incensed, great priestess; I shall be gone; I will fill up the number of the ghosts and be rendered back to darkness. Go, go, thou glory of our nation; mayest thou find fates more kind! This only he spoke, and at the word turned his steps.

Æneas on a sudden looks back, and under a rock on the left sees vast prisons enclosed with a triple wall, which Tartarean Phlegethon's rapid flood environs with torrents of flame, and whirls roaring rocks along. Fronting is a huge gate, with columns of solid adamant, that no strength of men, nor the gods themselves, can with steel demolish. An iron tower rises aloft; and there wakeful Tisiphone, with her bloody robe tucked up around her, sits to watch the vestibule both night and day. Hence groans are heard; the cruel lashes resound; the grating too of iron, and clank of dragging chains. Æneas, stopped short, and, starting, listened to the din. What scenes of guilt are these? O virgin, say; or with what pains are they chastised? what hideous yelling ascends to the skies! Then thus the

prophetess began: Renowned leader of the Trojans, no holy person is allowed to tread the accursed threshold; but Hecate, when she set me over the groves of Avernus, herself taught me the punishments appointed by the gods, and led me through every part. Cretan Rhadamanthus possesses these most ruthless realms; examines and punishes frauds; and forces every one to confess what crimes committed in the upper world he had left unatoned till the late hour of death, hugging himself in secret crime of no avail. Forthwith avenging Tisiphone, armed with her whip, scourges the guilty with cruel insult, and in her left hand shaking over them her grim snakes, calls the fierce troops of her sister Furies.

Then at length the accursed gates, grating on their dreadful-sounding hinges, are thrown open. See you what kind of watch sits in the entry? what figure guards the gate? An overgrown Hydra, more fell than any Fury, with fifty black gaping mouths, has her seat within. Then Tartarus itself sinks deep down, and extends toward the shades twice as far as is the prospect upward to the ethereal throne of Heaven. Here Earth's ancient progeny, the Titanian youth, hurled down with thunderbolts, welter in the profound abyss. Here too I saw the two sons of Aloeus, gigantic bodies, who attempted with their might to overturn the spacious heavens, and thrust

down Jove from his exalted kingdom. Salmoneus likewise I beheld suffering severe punishment, for having imitated Jove's flaming bolts, and the sounds of heaven. He, drawn in his chariot by four horses, and brandishing a torch, rode triumphant among the nations of Greece, and in the midst of the city Elis, and claimed to himself the honor of the gods: infatuate! who, with brazen car, and the prancing of his horn-hoofed steeds, would needs counterfeit the storms and inimitable thunder. But the almighty Sire amid the thick clouds threw a bolt (not firebrands he, nor smoky light from torches), and hurled him down headlong in a vast whirlwind. Here too you might have seen Tityus, the foster-child of all-bearing Earth: whose body is extended over nine whole acres; and a huge vulture, with her hooked beak, pecking at his immortal liver, and his bowels, the fruitful source of punishment, both searches them for her banquet, and dwells in the deep recesses of his breast; nor is any respite given to his fibres still springing up afresh. Why should I mention that Lapithæ, Ixion, and Pirithous, over whom hangs a black flinty rock, every moment threatening to tumble down, and seeming to be actually falling? Golden pillars supporting lofty genial couches shine, and full in their view are banquets furnished out with regal magnificence; the chief of the Furies sits by them, and debars them from touching the

provisions with their hands; and starts up, lifting her torch on high, and thunders over them with her voice. Here are those who, while life remained, had been at enmity with their brothers, had beaten a parent, or wrought deceit against a client; or who alone brooded over the acquired wealth, nor assigned a portion to their own, which class is the most numerous: those too who were slain for adultery, who joined in impious wars, and did not scruple to violate the faith they had plighted to their masters: shut up, they await their punishment. But what kind of punishment seek not to be informed, in what shape of misery, or in what state they are involved. Some roll a huge stone, and hang fast bound to the spokes of wheels. There sits, and to eternity shall sit, the unhappy Theseus: and Phlegyas most wretched is a monitor to all, and with loud voice proclaims through the shades: "Warned by example, learn righteousness, and not to contemn the gods." One sold his country for gold, and imposed on it a domineering tyrant; made and unmade laws for money. Another invaded his daughter's bed, and an unlawful wedlock: all of them dared some heinous crime, and accomplished what they dared. Had I a hundred tongues, and a hundred mouths, a voice of iron, I could not comprehend the species of their crimes, nor enumerate the names of all their punishments.

When the aged priestess of Phœbus had uttered these words, she adds, But come now, set forward, and finish the task you have undertaken; let us haste on: I see the walls of Pluto, wrought in the forges of the Cyclops, and the gates with their arch full in our view, where our instructions enjoin us to deposit this our offering. She said; and, with equal pace advancing through the gloomy path, they speedily traverse the intermediate space, and approach the gates. Æneas springs forward to the entry, sprinkles his body with fresh water, and fixes the bough in the fronting portal.

Having finished these rites, and performed the offering to the goddess, they came at length to the regions of joy, delightful green retreats, and blessed abodes in groves, where happiness abounds. A freer and purer sky here clothes the fields with sheeny light: they know their own sun, their own stars. Some exercise their limbs on the grassy green, in sports contend, and wrestle on the tawny sand: some strike the ground with their feet in the dance, and sing hymns. Orpheus, too, the Thracian priest, in his long robe, replies in melodious numbers to the seven distinguished notes; and now strikes the same with his fingers, now with his ivory quill. Here may be seen Teucer's ancient race, a most illustrious line, magnanimous heroes, born in happier times, —Ilus, Assaracus, and Dardanus, the founder of

Troy. From afar, Æneas views with wonder the arms and empty chariots of the chiefs. Their spears stand fixed in the ground, and up and down their horses feed at large through the plain. The same fondness they had when alive for chariots and arms, the same concern for training up shining steeds, follows them when deposited beneath the earth.

Lo! he beholds others on the right and left feasting upon the grass, and singing the joyful pæan to Apollo in concert, amid a fragrant grove of laurel; whence from on high the river Eridanus rolls in copious streams through the wood. Here is a band of those who sustained wounds in fighting for their country; priests who preserved themselves pure and holy, while life remained; pious poets, who sang in strains worthy of Apollo; those who improved life by the invention of arts, and who by their worthy deeds made others remember them: all these have their temples crowned with a snow-white fillet. Whom, gathered around, the Sibyl thus addressed, Musæus chiefly; for a numerous crowd had him in their centre, and looked up with reverence to him, raised above them by the height of his shoulders: Say, blessed souls, and thou, best of poets, what region, what place contains Anchises? on his account we have come, and crossed the great rivers of hell. And thus the hero briefly returned her an answer: None of us have a fixed abode; in

shady groves we dwell, or lie on couches all along the banks, and on meadows fresh with rivulets: but do you, if so your heart's inclination leads, overpass this eminence, and I will set you in the easy path. He said, and advances his steps on before, and shows them from a rising ground the shining plains; then they descend from the summit of the mountain. But Father Anchises, deep in a verdant dale, was surveying with studious care the souls there enclosed, who were to revisit the light above; and happened to be reviewing the whole number of his race, his dear descendants, their fates and fortunes, their manners and achievements. As soon as he beheld Æneas advancing toward him across the meads, he joyfully stretched out both his hands, and tears poured down his cheeks, and these words dropped from his mouth: Are you come at length, and has that piety, experienced by your sire, surmounted the arduous journey? Am I permitted, my son, to see your face, to hear and return the well-known accents? So indeed I concluded in my mind, and reckoned it would happen, computing the time; nor have my anxious hopes deceived me. Over what lands, O son, and over what immense seas have you, I hear, been tossed! with what dangers harassed! how I dreaded lest you had sustained harm from Libya's realms! But he said: Your ghost, your sorrowing ghost, my sire, oftentimes appearing, compelled me to set

forward to these thresholds. My fleet rides in the Tyrrhene Sea. Permit me, father, to join my right hand with yours; and withdraw not yourself from my embrace. So saying, he at the same time bedewed his cheeks with a flood of tears. There thrice he attempted to throw his arms around his neck; thrice the phantom, grasped in vain, escaped his hold, like the fleet gales, or resembling most a fugitive dream.

Meanwhile Æneas sees in the retired vale a grove situate by itself, shrubs rustling in the woods, and the river Lethe, which glides by those peaceful dwellings. Around this, unnumbered tribes and nations of ghosts were fluttering; as in meadows on a serene summer's day, when the bees sit on the various blossoms, and swarm around the snow-white lilies, all the plain buzzes with their humming noise. Æneas, confounded, shudders at the unexpected sight, and asks the causes,—what are those rivers in the distance, or what ghosts have in such crowds filled the banks? Then Father Anchises said: Those souls, for whom other bodies are destined by fate, at the stream of Lethe's flood quaff care-expelling draughts and lasting oblivion. Long indeed have I wished to give you a detail of these, and to point them out before you, and enumerate this my future race, that you may rejoice the more with me in the discovery of Italy. O father, is it to be imagined that any souls of an exalted na-

ture will go hence to the world above, and enter again into inactive bodies? What direful love of the light possesses the miserable beings? I, indeed, replies Anchises, will inform you, my son, nor hold you longer in suspense: and thus he unfolds each particular in order.

In the first place, the spirit within nourishes the heavens, the earth, and watery plains, the moon's enlightened orb, and the Titanian stars; and the mind, diffused through all the members, actuates the whole frame, and mingles with the vast body of the universe. Thence the race of men and beasts, the vital principles of the flying kind, and the monsters which the ocean breeds under its smooth plain. These principles have the active force of fire, and are of a heavenly original, so far as they are not clogged by noxious bodies, blunted by earth-born limbs and dying members. Hence they fear and desire, grieve and rejoice; and, shut up in darkness and a gloomy prison, lose sight of their native skies. Even when with the last beams of light their life is gone, yet not every ill, nor all corporeal stains, are quite removed from the unhappy beings; and it is absolutely necessary that many imperfections which have long been joined to the soul should be in marvellous ways increased and riveted therein. Therefore are they afflicted with punishments, and pay the penalties of their former ills. Some, hung on high, are spread out to

the empty winds; in others, the guilt not done away is washed out in a vast watery abyss, or burned away in fire. We each endure his own manes, thence are we conveyed along the spacious Elysium, and we, the happy few, possess the fields of bliss; till length of time, after the fixed period is elapsed, hath done away the inherent stain, and hath left the pure celestial reason, and the fiery energy of the simple spirit. All these, after they have rolled away a thousand years, are summoned forth by the god in a great body to the river Lethe; to the intent that, losing memory of the past, they may revisit the vaulted realms above, and again become willing to return into bodies. Anchises thus spoke, and leads his son, together with the Sibyl, into the midst of the assembly and noisy throng; thence chooses a rising ground, whence he may survey them all as they stand opposite to him in a long row, and discern their looks as they approach.

Now come, I will explain to you what glory shall henceforth attend the Trojan race, what descendants await them of the Italian nation, distinguished souls, and who shall succeed to our name; yourself too I will instruct in your particular fate. See you that youth who leans on his pointless spear? He by destiny holds a station nearest to the light; he shall ascend to the upper world the first of your race who shall have a mixture of Italian blood in his veins, Silvius, an

Alban name, your last issue; whom late your consort Lavinia shall in the woods bring forth to you in your advanced age, himself a king, and the father of kings; in whom our line shall reign over Alba Longa. The next is Procas, the glory of the Trojan nation; then Capys and Numitor follow, and Æneas Silvius, who shall represent thee in name, equally distinguished for piety and arms, if ever he receive the crown of Alba. See what youths are these, what manly force they show! and bear their temples shaded with civic oak; these to thy honor shall build Nomentum, Gabii, and the city Fidena; these on the mountains shall raise the Collatine towers, Pometia, the fort of Inuus, Bola, and Cora. These shall then be famous names; now they are lands without names. Further, martial Romulus, whom Ilia of the line Assaracus shall bear, shall add himself as companion to his grandsire Numitor. See you not how the double plumes stand on his head erect, and how the father of the gods himself already marks him out with his distinguished honors! Lo, my son, under his auspicious influence, Rome, that city of renown, shall measure her dominion by the earth, and her valor by the skies, and that one city shall for herself wall around seven strong hills, happy in a race of heroes; like Mother Berecynthia, when crowned with turrets she rides in her chariot through the Phrygian towns, joyful in a progeny of gods,

embracing a hundred grandchildren, all inhabitants of heaven, all seated in the high celestial abodes. This way now bend both your eyes; view this lineage, and your own Romans. This is Cæsar, and these are the whole race of Iülus, who shall one day rise to the spacious axle of the sky. This, this is the man whom you have often heard promised to you, Augustus Cæsar, the offspring of a god; who once more shall establish the golden age in Latium, through those lands where Saturn reigned of old, and shall extend his empire over the Garamantes and Indians: their land lies without the signs of the zodiac, beyond the sun's annual course, where Atlas, supporting heaven on his shoulders, turns the axle studded with flaming stars. Against his approach, even now both the Caspian realms and the land about the Palus Mæotis are dreadfully dismayed at the responses of the gods, and the quaking mouths of seven-fold Nile hurry on their troubled waves. Even Hercules did not run over so many countries, though he transfixed the brazen-footed hind, quelled the forests of Erymanthus, and made Lerna tremble with his bow: nor Bacchus, who in triumph drives his car with reins wrapped about with vine-leaves, driving the tigers from Nyssa's lofty top. And doubt we yet to extend our glory by our deeds? or is fear a bar to our settling in the Ausonian land?

But who is he at a distance, distinguished by

the olive boughs, bearing the sacred utensils? I know the locks and hoary beard of the Roman king, who first shall establish this city by laws, sent from little Cures and a poor estate to vast empire. Whom Tullus shall next succeed, who shall break the peace of his country, and rouse to arms his inactive subjects, and troops now unused to triumphs. Whom follows next vain-glorious Ancus, even now too much rejoicing in the breath of popular applause. Will you also see the Tarquin kings, and the haughty soul of Brutus, the avenger of his country's wrongs, and the recovered fasces? He first shall receive the consular power, and the axe of justice inflexibly severe; and the sire shall, for the sake of glorious liberty, summon to death his own sons, raising an unknown kind of war. Unhappy he! however posterity shall interpret that action, love to his country, and the unbounded desire of praise, will prevail over paternal affection. See besides at some distance the Decii, Drusi, Torquatus, inflexibly severe with the axe, and Camillus recovering the standards. But those two ghosts whom you observe to shine in equal arms, in perfect friendship now, and while they remain shut up in night, ah! what war, what battles and havoc, will they between them raise, if once they have attained to the light of life! the father-in-law descending from the Alpine hills, and the tower of Monœcus; the son-in-law furnished with the

troops of the East to oppose him. Make not, my sons, make not such unnatural wars familiar to your minds; nor turn the powerful strength of your country against its bowels. And thou, Cæsar, first forbear, thou who derivest thy origin from heaven; fling those arms out of thy hand, O thou, my own blood! That one, having triumphed over Corinth, shall drive his chariot victorious to the lofty Capitol, illustrious from the slaughter of Greeks. The other shall overthrow Argos, and Mycenæ, Agamemnon's seat, and Eacides himself, the descendant of valorous Achilles; avenging his Trojan ancestors, and the violated temple of Minerva. Who can in silence pass over thee, great Cato, or thee, Cossus? who the family of Gracchus, or both the Scipios, those two thunderbolts of war, the bane of Africa, and Fabricius in low fortune exalted? or thee, Serranus, sowing in the furrow which thy own hands made? Whither, ye Fabii, do you hurry me tired? Thou art that Fabius justly styled the Greatest, who alone shall repair our state by delay. Others, I grant indeed, shall with more delicacy mould the breathing brass; from marble draw the features to the life; plead causes better; describe with the rod the courses of the heavens, and explain the rising stars: to rule the nations with imperial sway be your care, O Romans; these shall be your arts; to impose terms of peace, to spare the humbled, and crush the proud.

Thus Father Anchises, and, as they are wondering, subjoins: Behold how adorned with triumphal spoils Marcellus stalks along, and shines victor above the heroes all? He, mounted on his steed, shall prop the Roman state in the rage of a formidable insurrection; the Carthaginians he shall humble, and the rebellious Gaul, and dedicate to Father Quirinus the third spoils. And upon this Æneas says; for he beheld marching with him a youth distinguished by his beauty and shining arms, but his countenance of little joy, and his eyes sunk and dejected: What youth is he, O father, who thus accompanies the hero as he walks? is he a son, or one of the illustrious line of his descendants? What bustling noise of attendants round him! How great resemblance in him to the other! but sable Night with her dreary shade hovers around his head. Then Father Anchises, while tears gushed forth, began: Seek not, my son, to know the deep disaster of thy kindred; him the Fates shall just show on earth, nor suffer long to exist. Ye gods, Rome's sons had seemed too powerful in your eyes, had these your gifts been permanent. What groans of heroes shall that field near the imperial city of Mars send forth! what funeral pomp shall you, O Tiberinus, see, when you glide by his recent tomb! Neither shall any youth of the Trojan line in hope exalt the Latin fathers so high; nor shall the Land of Romulus ever

glory so much in any of her sons. Ah piety! ah that faith of ancient times! and that right hand invincible in war! none with impunity had encountered him in arms, either when on foot he rushed upon the foe, or when he pierced with his spur his foaming courser's flanks. Ah youth, meet subject for pity! if by any means thou canst burst rigorous fate, thou shalt be a Marcellus. Give me lilies in handfuls; let me strew the blooming flowers; these offerings at least let me heap upon my descendant's shade, and discharge this unavailing duty. Thus up and down they roam through all the Elysian regions in spacious airy fields, and survey every object: through each of which when Anchises had conducted his son, and fired his soul with the love of coming fame, he next recounts to the hero what wars he must hereafter wage, informs him of the Laurentine people, and of the city of Latinus, and by what means he may shun or surmount every toil.

Two gates there are of Sleep, whereof the one is said to be of horn; by which an easy egress is given to true visions; the other shining, wrought of white ivory; but through it the infernal gods send up false dreams to the upper world. When Anchises had addressed this discourse to his son and the Sibyl together, and dismissed them by the ivory gate, the hero speeds his way to the ships, and revisits his friends; then steers di-

rectly along the coast for the port of Caïeta: where, when he had arrived, the anchor is thrown out from the forecastle, the sterns rest upon the shore.

CICERO'S VISION OF SCIPIO

Translated by Cyrus R. Edmonds.

When I had arrived in Africa as military tribune of the fourth legion, as you know, under the Consul Lucius Manlius, nothing was more delightful to me than having an interview with Massinissa, a prince who, for good reasons, was most friendly to our family. When I arrived, the old man shed tears as he embraced me. Soon after, he raised his eyes up to heaven and said, I thank thee, most glorious sun, and ye the other inhabitants of heaven, that before I depart from this life I see in my kingdom, and under this roof, Publius Cornelius Scipio, by whose very name I am refreshed, for never does the memory of that greatest, that most invincible of men vanish from my mind. After this I informed myself from him about his kingdom, and he from me about our government; and that day was consumed in much conversation on both sides.

Afterward, having been entertained with royal magnificence, we prolonged our conversation to a late hour of the night; while the old man talked

of nothing but of Africanus, and remembered not only all his actions, but all his sayings. Then, when we departed to bed, owing to my journey and my sitting up to a late hour, a sleep sounder than ordinary came over me. In this, (I suppose from the subject on which we had been talking, for it commonly happens that our thoughts and conversations beget something analogous in our sleep, just as Ennius writes about Homer, of whom assuredly he was accustomed most frequently to think and talk when awake,) Africanus presented himself to me in that form which was more known from his statue than from his own person.

No sooner did I know him than I shuddered. "Draw near," said he, "with confidence, lay aside your dread, and commit what I say to your memory. You see that city, which by me was forced to submit to the people of Rome, but is now renewing its former wars, and cannot remain at peace," (he spoke these words pointing to Carthage from an eminence that was full of stars, bright and glorious,) "which you are now come, before you are a complete soldier, to attack. Within two years you shall be Consul, and shall overthrow it; and you shall acquire for yourself that surname that you now wear, as bequeathed by me. After you have destroyed Carthage, performed a triumph, and been censor; after, in the capacity of legate, you have visited Egypt,

Syria, Asia, and Greece, you shall, in your absence, be chosen a second time Consul; then you shall finish a most dreadful war, and utterly destroy Numantia. But when you shall be borne into the capitol in your triumphal chariot, you shall find the government thrown into confusion by the machinations of my grandson; and here, my Africanus, you must display to your country the lustre of your spirit, genius, and wisdom.

"But at this period I perceive that the path of your destiny is a doubtful one; for when your life has passed through seven times eight oblique journeys and returns of the sun, and when these two numbers (each of which is regarded as a complete one—one on one account and the other on another) shall, in their natural circuit, have brought you to the crisis of your fate, then will the whole state turn itself toward you and your glory; the Senate, all virtuous men, our allies, and the Latins, shall look up to you. Upon your single person the preservation of your country will depend; and, in short, it is your part, as dictator, to settle the government, if you can but escape the impious hands of your kinsmen." (Here, when Lælius uttered an exclamation, and the rest groaned with great excitement, Scipio said, with a gentle smile, "I beg that you will not waken me out of my dream, give a little time and listen to the sequel.")

"But that you may be more earnest in the de-

fence of your country, know from me, that a certain place in heaven is assigned to all who have preserved, or assisted, or improved their country, where they are to enjoy an endless duration of happiness. For there is nothing which takes place on earth more acceptable to that Supreme Deity who governs all this world, than those councils and assemblies of men bound together by law, which are termed states; the governors and preservers of these go from hence, and hither do they return." Here, frightened as I was, not so much from the dread of death as of the treachery of my friends, I nevertheless asked him whether my father Paulus, and others, whom we thought to be dead, were yet alive? "To be sure they are alive," replied Africanus, "for they have escaped from the fetters of the body as from a prison; that which is called your life is really death. But behold your father Paulus approaching." No sooner did I see him, than I poured forth a flood of tears; but he, embracing and kissing me, forbade me to weep. And when, having suppressed my tears, I began first to be able to speak, "Why," said I, "thou most sacred and excellent father, since this is life, as I hear Africanus affirm, why do I tarry on earth, and not hasten to come to you?"

"Not so, my son," he replied; "unless that God, whose temple is all this which you behold, shall free you from this imprisonment in the body, you

can have no admission to this place; for men have been created under this condition, that they should keep that globe which you see in the middle of this temple, and which is called the earth. And a soul has been supplied to them from those eternal fires which you call constellations and stars, and which, being globular and round, are animated with divine spirit, and complete their cycles and revolutions with amazing rapidity. Therefore you, my Publius, and all good men, must preserve your souls in the keeping of your bodies; nor are you, without the order of that Being who bestowed them upon you, to depart from mundane life, lest you seem to desert the duty of a man, which has been assigned you by God. Therefore, Scipio, like your grandfather here, and me who begot you, cultivate justice and piety; which, while it should be great toward your parents and relations, should be greatest toward your country. Such a life is the path to heaven and the assembly of those who have lived before, and who, having been released from their bodies, inhabit that place which thou beholdest."

Now the place my father spoke of was a radiant circle of dazzling brightness amid the flaming bodies, which you, as you have learned from the Greeks, term the Milky Way; from which position all other objects seemed to me, as I surveyed them, marvellous and glorious. There

were stars which we never saw from this place, and their magnitudes were such as we never imagined; the smallest of which was that which, placed upon the extremity of the heavens, but nearest to the earth, shone with borrowed light. But the globular bodies of the stars greatly exceeded the magnitude of the earth, which now to me appeared so small, that I was grieved to see our empire contracted, as it were, into a very point.

Which, while I was too eagerly gazing on, Africanus said, "How long will your attention be fixed upon the earth? Do you not see into what temples you have entered? All things are connected by nine circles, or rather spheres; one of which (which is the outermost) is heaven, and comprehends all the rest, inhabited by that all-powerful God, who bounds and controls the others; and in this sphere reside the original principles of those endless revolutions which the planets perform. Within this are contained seven other spheres, that turn round backward, that is, in a contrary direction to that of the heaven. Of these, that planet which on earth you call Saturn occupies one sphere. That shining body which you see next is called Jupiter, and is friendly and salutary to mankind. Next the lucid one, terrible to the earth, which you call Mars. The Sun holds the next place, almost under the middle region; he is the chief, the

leader, and the director of the other luminaries; he is the soul and guide of the world, and of such immense bulk, that he illuminates and fills all other objects with his light. He is followed by the orbit of Venus, and that of Mercury, as attendants; and the Moon rolls in the lowest sphere, enlightened by the rays of the Sun. Below this there is nothing but what is mortal and transitory, excepting those souls which are given to the human race by the goodness of the gods. Whatever lies above the Moon is eternal. For the earth, which is the ninth sphere, and is placed in the centre of the whole system, is immovable and below all the rest; and all bodies, by their natural gravitation, tend toward it."

Which as I was gazing at in amazement I said, as I recovered myself, From whence proceed these sounds, so strong and yet so sweet, that fill my ears? "The melody," replies he, "which you hear, and which, though composed in unequal time, is nevertheless divided into regular harmony, is effected by the impulse and motion of the spheres themselves, which, by a happy temper of sharp and grave notes, regularly produces various harmonic effects. Now it is impossible that such prodigious movements should pass in silence; and nature teaches that the sounds which the spheres at one extremity utter must be sharp, and those on the other extremity must be grave; on which account, that highest

revolution of the star-studded heaven, whose motion is more rapid, is carried on with a sharp and quick sound; whereas this of the moon, which is situated the lowest, and at the other extremity, moves with the gravest sound. For the earth, the ninth sphere, remaining motionless, abides invariably in the innermost position, occupying the central spot in the universe.

"Now these eight directions, two of which have the same powers, effect seven sounds, differing in their modulations, which number is the connecting principle of almost all things. Some learned men, by imitating this harmony with strings and vocal melodies, have opened a way for their return to this place; as all others have done, who, endued with pre-eminent qualities, have cultivated in their mortal life the pursuits of heaven.

"The ears of mankind, filled with these sounds, have become deaf, for of all your senses it is the most blunted. Thus, the people who live near the place where the Nile rushes down from very high mountains to the parts which are called Catadupa, are destitute of the sense of hearing, by reason of the greatness of the noise. Now this sound, which is effected by the rapid rotation of the whole system of nature, is so powerful that human hearing cannot comprehend it, just as you cannot look directly upon the sun, because your sight and sense are overcome by his beams."

Though admiring these scenes, yet I still continued directing my eyes in the same direction toward the earth. On this Africanus said, "I perceive that even now you are contemplating the abode and home of the human race. And as this appears to you diminutive, as it really is, fix your regard upon these celestial scenes, and despise those abodes of men. What celebrity are you able to attain to in the discourse of men, or what glory that ought to be desired? You perceive that men dwell on but few and scanty portions of the earth, and that amid these spots, as it were, vast solitudes are interposed. As to those who inhabit the earth, not only are they so separated that no communication can circulate among them from the one to the other, but part lie upon one side, part upon another, and part are diametrically opposite to you, from whom you assuredly can expect no glory.

"You are now to observe that the same earth is encircled and encompassed as it were by certain zones, of which the two that are most distant from one another, and lie as it were toward the vortexes of the heavens in both directions, are rigid as you see with frost, while the middle and the largest zone is burned up with the heat of the sun. Two of these are habitable; of which the southern, whose inhabitants imprint their footsteps in an opposite direction to you, have no relation to your race. As to this other, lying to-

ward the north, which you inhabit, observe what a small portion of it falls to your share; for all that part of the earth which is inhabited by you, which narrows toward the south and north, but widens from east to west, is no other than a little island surrounded by that sea which on earth you call the Atlantic, sometimes the great sea, and sometimes the ocean; and yet, with so grand a name, you see how diminutive it is! Now do you think it possible for your renown, or that of any one of us, to move from those cultivated and inhabited spots of ground, and pass beyond that Caucasus, or swim across yonder Ganges? What inhabitant of the other parts of the east, or of the extreme regions of the setting sun, of those tracts that run toward the south or toward the north, shall ever hear of your name? Now, supposing them cut off, you see at once within what narrow limits your glory would fain expand itself. As to those who speak of you, how long will they speak?

"Let me even suppose that a future race of men shall be desirous of transmitting to their posterity your renown or mine, as they received it from their fathers; yet when we consider the convulsions and conflagrations that must necessarily happen at some definite period, we are unable to attain not only to an eternal, but even to a lasting fame. Now of what consequence is it to you to be talked of by those who are born after you,

and not by those who were born before you, who certainly were as numerous and more virtuous, —especially as among the very men who are thus to celebrate our renown not a single one can preserve the recollections of a single year? For mankind ordinarily measure their year by the revolution of the sun, that is, of a single heavenly body. But when all the planets shall return to the same position which they once had, and bring back after a long rotation the same aspect of the entire heavens, then the year may be said to be truly completed; in which I do not venture to say how many ages of mankind will be contained. For, as of old, when the spirit of Romulus entered these temples, the sun disappeared to mortals and seemed to be extinguished; so whenever the sun be eclipsed at the same time with all the stars and constellations, brought back to the same starting-point, shall again disappear, then you are to reckon the year to be complete. But be assured that the twentieth part of such a year is not yet elapsed.

"If, therefore, you hope to return to this place, toward which all the aspirations of great and good men are tending, what must be the value of that human fame that endures for but a little part of a single year? If, then, you would fain direct your regards on high, and aspire to this mansion and eternal abode, you neither will devote yourself to the rumors of the vulgar, nor

will you rest your hopes and your interest on human rewards. Virtue herself ought to attract you by her own charms to true glory; what others may talk of you, for talk they will, let themselves consider. But all such talk is confined to the narrow limits of those regions which you see. None respecting any man was everlasting. It is both extinguished by the death of the individual, and perishes altogether in the oblivion of posterity."

Which, when he had said, I replied, "Truly, O Africanus, since the path to heaven lies open to those who have deserved well of their country, though from my childhood I have ever trod in your and my father's footsteps without disgracing your glory, yet now, with so noble a prize set before me, I shall strive with much more diligence."

"Do so strive," replied he, "and do not consider yourself, but your body, to be mortal. For you are not the being which this corporeal figure evinces; but the mind of every man is the man, and not that form which may be delineated with a finger. Know therefore that you are a divine person. Since it is divinity that has consciousness, sensation, memory, and foresight,—that governs, regulates, and moves that body over which it has been appointed, just as the Supreme Deity rules this world; and in like manner as an eternal God guides this world, which in

some respect is perishable, so an eternal spirit animates your frail body.

"For that which is ever moving is eternal; now that which communicates to another object a motion which is received elsewhere, must necessarily cease to live as soon as its motion is at an end. Thus the being which is self-motive is the only being that is eternal, because it never is abandoned by its own properties, neither is this self-motion ever at an end; nay, this is the fountain, this is the beginning of motion to all things that are thus subjects of motion. Now there can be no commencement of what is aboriginal, for all things proceed from a beginning; therefore a beginning can rise from no other cause, for if it proceeded from another cause it would not be aboriginal, which, if it have no commencement, certainly never has an end; for the primeval principle, if extinct, can neither be reproduced from any other source, nor produce anything else from itself, because it is necessary that all things should spring from some original source."

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HELL, PURGATORY, AND HEAVEN

Milman's History of Latin Christianity. Book XIV. ch. 2.

Throughout the Middle Ages the world after death continued to reveal more and more fully

its awful secrets. Hell, Purgatory, Heaven became more distinct, if it may be so said, more visible. Their site, their topography, their torments, their trials, their enjoyments, became more conceivable, almost more palpable to sense: till Dante summed up the whole of this traditional lore, or at least, with a Poet's intuitive sagacity, seized on all which was most imposing, effective, real, and condensed it in his three co-ordinate poems. That Hell had a local existence, that immaterial spirits suffered bodily and material torments, none, or scarcely one hardy speculative mind, presumed to doubt. Hell had admitted, according to legend, more than one visitant from this upper world, who returned to relate his fearful journey to wondering man: St. Farcy, St. Vettin, a layman Bernilo. But all these early descents interest us only as they may be supposed or appear to have been faint types of the great Italian Poet. Dante is the one authorized topographer of the mediæval Hell. His originality is no more called in question by these mere signs and manifestations of the popular belief, than by the existence and reality of those objects or scenes in external nature which he describes with such unrivalled truth. In Dante meet unreconciled (who thought of or cared for their reconciliation?) those strange contradictions, immaterial souls subject to material torments: spirits which had put off the mortal body,

cognizable by the corporeal sense. The mediæval Hell had gathered from all ages, all lands, all races, its imagery, its denizens, its site, its access, its commingling horrors; from the old Jewish traditions, perhaps from the regions beyond the sphere of the Old Testament; from the Pagan poets, with their black rivers, their Cerberus, their boatman and his crazy vessel; perhaps from the Teutonic Hela, through some of the earlier visions. Then came the great Poet, and reduced all this wild chaos to a kind of order, moulded it up with the cosmical notions of the times, and made it, as it were, one with the prevalent mundane system. Above all, he brought it to the very borders of our world; he made the life beyond the grave one with our present life; he mingled in close and intimate relation the present and the future. Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, were but an immediate expansion and extension of the present world. And this is among the wonderful causes of Dante's power, the realizing the unreal by the admixture of the real: even as in his imagery the actual, homely, every-day language or similitude mingles with and heightens the fantastic, the vague, the transmundane. What effect had Hell produced, if peopled by ancient, almost immemorial objects of human detestation, Nimrod or Iscariot, or Julian or Mohammed? It was when Popes all but living, Kings but now on their thrones, Guelfs who had

hardly ceased to walk the streets of Florence, Ghibellines almost yet in exile, revealed their awful doom,—this it was which, as it expressed the passions and the fears of mankind of an instant, immediate, actual, bodily, comprehensible place of torment; so, wherever it was read, it deepened that notion, and made it more distinct and natural. This was the Hell, conterminous to the earth, but separate, as it were, by a gulf passed by almost instantaneous transition, of which the Priesthood held the keys. These keys the audacious Poet had wrenched from their hands, and dared to turn on many of themselves, speaking even against Popes the sentence of condemnation. Of that which Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, were in popular opinion during the Middle Ages, Dante was but the full, deep, concentred expression; what he embodied in verse, all men believed, feared, hoped.

Purgatory had now its intermediate place between Heaven and Hell, as unquestioned, as undisturbed by doubt; its existence was as much an article of uncontested popular belief as Heaven or Hell. It were as unjust and unphilosophical to attribute all the legendary lore which realized Purgatory to the sordid invention of the Churchman or the Monk, as it would be unhistorical to deny the use which was made of this superstition to exact tribute from the fears or the fondness of mankind. But the abuse grew

out of the belief; the belief was not slowly, subtly, deliberately instilled into the mind for the sake of the abuse. Purgatory, possible with St. Augustine, probable with Gregory the Great, grew up, I am persuaded, (its growth is singularly indistinct and untraceable,) out of the mercy and modesty of the Priesthood. To the eternity of Hell torments there is and ever must be—notwithstanding the peremptory decrees of dogmatic theology and the reverential dread in so many religious minds of tampering with what seems the language of the New Testament—a tacit repugnance. But when the doom of every man rested on the lips of the Priest, on his absolution or refusal of absolution, that Priest might well tremble with some natural awe—awe not confessed to himself—at dismissing the soul to an irrevocable, unrepealable, unchangeable destiny. He would not be averse to pronounce a more mitigated, a reversible sentence. The keys of Heaven and of Hell were a fearful trust, a terrible responsibility; the key of Purgatory might be used with far less presumption, with less trembling confidence. Then came naturally, as it might seem, the strengthening and exaltation of the efficacy of prayer, of the efficacy of the religious ceremonials, of the efficacy of the sacrifice of the altar, and the efficacy of the intercession of the Saints: and these all within the province, within the power, of the Sacerdotal Or-

der. Their authority, their influence, their intervention, closed not with the grave. The departed soul was still to a certain degree dependent upon the Priest. They had yet a mission, it might be of mercy; they had still some power of saving the soul after it had departed from the body. Their faithful love, their inexhaustible interest, might yet rescue the sinner; for he had not reached those gates—over which alone was written, "There is no Hope"—the gates of Hell. That which was a mercy, a consolation, became a trade, an inexhaustible source of wealth. Praying souls out of Purgatory by masses said on their behalf, became an ordinary office, an office which deserved, which could demand, which did demand, the most prodigal remuneration. It was later that the Indulgence, originally the remission of so much penance, of so many days, weeks, months, years, or of that which was the commutation for penance, so much almsgiving or munificence to churches or Churchmen, in sound at least extended (and mankind, the high and low vulgar of mankind, are governed by sound) its significance: it was literally understood as the remission of so many years, sometimes centuries, of Purgatory.

If there were living men to whom it had been vouchsafed to visit and to return and to reveal the secrets of remote and terrible Hell, there were those too who were admitted in vision, or in actual

life to more accessible Purgatory, and brought back intelligence of its real local existence, and of the state of souls within its penitential circles. There is a legend of St. Paul himself; of the French monk St. Farcy; of Drithelm, related by Bede; of the Emperor Charles the Fat, by William of Malmesbury. Matthew Paris relates two or three journeys of the Monk of Evesham, of Thurkill, an Essex peasant, very wild and fantastic. The Purgatory of St. Patrick, the Purgatory of Owen Miles, the vision of Alberic of Monte Cassino, were among the most popular and wide-spread legends of the ages preceding Dante; and as in Hell, so in Purgatory, Dante sums up in his noble verses the whole theory, the whole popular belief as to this intermediate sphere.

If Hell and Purgatory thus dimly divulged their gloomy mysteries, if they had been visited by those who returned to actual life, Heaven was unapproached, unapproachable. To be rapt to the higher Heaven remained the privilege of the Apostle; the popular conception was content to rest in modest ignorance. Though the Saints might descend on beneficent missions to the world of man; of the site of their beatitude, of the state of the Blessed, of the joys of the supernal world, they brought but vague and indefinite tidings. In truth, the notion of Heaven was inextricably mingled up with the astronomical and cosmogon-

ical as well as with the theological notions of the age. Dante's Paradise blends the Ptolmaic system with the nine angelic circles of the Pseudo Dionysius; the material heavens in their nine circles; above and beyond them, in the invisible heavens, the nine Hierarchies; and yet higher than the highest heavens the dwelling of the Ineffable Trinity. The Beatific Vision, whether immediate or to await the Last Day, had been eluded rather than determined, till the rash and presumptuous theology of Pope John XXII. compelled a declaration from the Church. But yet this ascent to the Heaven of Heavens would seem from Dante, the best interpreter of the dominant conceptions, to have been an especial privilege, if it may be so said, of the most Blessed of the Blessed, the Saint of Saints. There is a manifest gradation in Beatitude and Sanctity. According to the universal cosmical theory, the Earth, the round and level earth, was the centre of the whole system. It was usually supposed to be encircled by the vast, circumambient, endless ocean; but beyond that ocean (with a dim reminiscence, it should seem, of the Elysian Fields of the poets) was placed a Paradise, where the souls of men hereafter to be blest awaited the final resurrection. Dante takes the other theory: he peoples the nine material heavens—that is, the cycle of the Moon, Venus, Mercury, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the fixed stars, and the

firmament above, or the Primum Mobile—with those who are admitted to a progressively advancing state of glory and blessedness. All this, it should seem, is below the ascending circles of the Celestial Hierarchies, that immediate vestibule or fore-court of the Holy of Holies, the Heaven of Heavens, into which the most perfect of the Saints are admitted. They are commingled with, yet unabsorbed by, the Redeemer, in mystic union; yet the mysticism still reverently endeavors to maintain some distinction in regard to this Light, which, as it has descended upon earth, is drawn up again to the highest Heavens, and has a kind of communion with the yet Incommunicable Deity. That in all the Paradise of Dante there should be a dazzling sameness, a mystic indistinctness, an inseparable blending of the real and the unreal, is not wonderful, if we consider the nature of the subject, and the still more incoherent and incongruous popular conceptions which he had to represent and to harmonize. It is more wonderful that, with these few elements, Light, Music, and Mysticism, he should, by his singular talent of embodying the purely abstract and metaphysical thought in the liveliest imagery, represent such things with the most objective truth, yet without disturbing their fine spiritualism. The subtilest scholasticism is not more subtile than Dante. It is perhaps a bold assertion, but what is there on these

transcendent subjects in the vast theology of Aquinas, of which the essence and sum is not in the Paradise of Dante? Dante, perhaps, though expressing to a great extent the popular conception of Heaven, is as much by his innate sublimity above it, as St. Thomas himself.

THE VISION OF FRATE ALBERICO

Wright, St. Patrick's Purgatory, p. 118.

Alberic, when he wrote his vision, was a monk of Monte Cassino. His father was a baron, lord of the castle de' Sette Fratelli, in the Campagna of Rome. In his tenth year, the child Alberic was seized with a languor, and lay nine days and nine nights in a trance, to all appearance dead. As soon as he had fallen into this condition, a white bird, like a dove, came and put its bill into his mouth, and seemed to lift him up, and then he saw St. Peter and two angels, who carried him to the lower regions. St. Peter told him that he would see the least torments first, and afterwards, successively, the more terrible punishments of the other world. They came first to a place filled with red-hot burning cinders and boiling vapor, in which little children were purged; those of one year old being subjected to this torment during seven days; those of two years, fourteen days; and so on, in proportion to their age. Then they

entered a terrible valley, in which Alberic saw a great number of persons plunged to different depths, according to their different degrees of criminality, in frost, and cold, and ice, which consumed them like fire; these were adulterers, and people who had led impure lives. Then they approached a still more fearful valley, filled with trees, the branches of which were long spikes, on which hung women transfixed through their breasts, while venomous serpents were sucking them; these were women who had refused pity to orphans. Other women, who had been faithless to the marriage bed, were suspended by the hair over raging fires. Next he saw an iron ladder, three hundred and sixty cubits long, red hot, and under it a great boiler of melted oil, pitch, and resin; married persons who had not been continent on sabbaths and holy days were compelled to mount this ladder, and ever as they were obliged to quit their hold by the heat, they dropped into the boiler below. Then they beheld vast fires in which were burnt the souls of tyrannical and cruel lords, and of women who had destroyed their offspring. Next was a great space full of fire like blood, in which homicides were thrown; and after this there stood an immense vessel filled with boiling brass, tin, lead, sulphur, and resin, in which were immersed during three years those who had encouraged wicked priests. They next came to the mouth of the in-

fernal pit, (*os infernalis baratri,*) a vast gulf, dark, and emitting an intolerable stench, and full of screaming and howling. By the pit was a serpent of infinite magnitude, bound by a great chain, the one end of which seemed to be fastened in the pit; before the mouth of this serpent stood a multitude of souls, which he sucked in like flies at each breath, and then, with the return of respiration, blew them out scorched to sparks; and this process continued till the souls were purged of their sins. The pit was so dark that Alberic could not see what was going on in hell. After quitting this spot, Alberic was conducted first to a valley in which persons who had committed sacrilege were burnt in a sea of flames; then to a pit of fire in which simonists were punished; next to a place filled with flames, and with serpents and dragons, in which were tormented those who, having embraced the monastic profession, had quitted it and returned to a secular life; and afterwards to a great black lake of sulphureous water, full of serpents and scorpions, in which the souls of detractors and false witnesses were immersed to the chin, and their faces continually flogged with serpents by demons who hovered over them. On the borders of hell, Alberic saw two "malignant spirits" in the form of a dog and a lion, which he was told blew out from their fiery mouths all the torments that were outside of hell, and at every breath the souls before them

were wafted each into the peculiar punishment appropriated to him. The visitor was here left for a moment by his conductors; and the demons seized upon him, and would have thrown him into the fire, had not St. Peter suddenly arrived to rescue him. He was carried thence to a fair plain, where he saw thieves carrying heavy collars of iron, red hot, about their necks, hands, and feet. He saw here a great burning pitchy river, issuing from hell, and an iron bridge over it, which appeared very broad and easy for the virtuous to pass; but when sinners attempted it, it became narrow as a thread, and they fell over into the river, and afterwards attempted it again, but were not allowed to pass until they had been sufficiently boiled to purge them of their sins. After this the Apostle showed Alberic an extensive plain, three days' and three nights' journey in breadth, covered with thorns and brambles, in which souls were hunted and tormented by a demon mounted on a great and swift dragon, and their clothing and limbs torn to pieces by the thorns as they endeavored to escape from him; by degrees they were purged of their sins, and became lighter, so that they could run faster, until at last they escaped into a very pleasant plain, filled with purified souls, where their torn members and garments were immediately restored; and here Alberic saw monks and martyrs, and good people, in great joy. He then

proceeded through the habitations of the blessed. In the midst of a beautiful plain, covered with flowers, rose the mountain of paradise, with the tree at the top. After having conducted the visitor through the seven heavens, the last of which was held by Saturn, they brought him to a wall, and let him look over, but he was forbidden to tell what he had seen on the other side. They subsequently carried him through the different regions of the world, and showed him many extraordinary things, and, among the rest, some persons subjected to purgatorial punishments in different places on the earth.

THE VISION OF WALKELIN

Odericus Vitalis, Ecclesiastical History, Book VIII. ch. 17.
Tr. by Thomas Forester.

I consider that I ought not to suppress and pass over in silence what happened to a certain priest of the diocese of Lisieux in the beginning of January. In a village called Bonneval there was a priest named Walkelin who served the church of St. Aubin of Anjou, who from a monk became bishop and confessor. At the commencement of the month of January, 1091, this priest was summoned in the night-time, as the occasion required, to visit a sick man who lived at the farthest extremity of his parish. As he

was pursuing his solitary road homewards, far from any habitation of man, he heard a great noise like the tramp of a numerous body of troops, and thought within himself that the sounds proceeded from the army of Robert de Belèsme on their march to lay siege to the castle of Courci. The moon, being in her eighth day in the constellation of the Ram, shed a clear light, so that it was easy to find the way. Now the priest was young, undaunted, and bold, and of a powerful and active frame of body. However, he hesitated when the sounds, which seemed to proceed from troops on the march, first reached his ears, and began to consider whether he should take to flight to avoid being laid hold of and discourteously stripped by the worthless camp followers, or manfully stand on his defence if any one molested him. Just then he espied four medlar-trees in a field at a good distance from the path, and determined to seek shelter behind them, as fast as he could, until the cavalry had passed. But as he was running he was stopped by a man of enormous stature, armed with a massive club, who, raising his weapon above his head, shouted to him, "Stand! Take not a step farther!" The priest, frozen with terror, stood motionless, leaning on his staff. The gigantic club-bearer also stood close to him, and, without offering to do him any injury, quietly waited for the passage of the troop. And now, behold, a

great crowd of people came by on foot, carrying on their heads and shoulders sheep, clothes, furniture, and movables of all descriptions, such as robbers are in the habit of pillaging. All were making great lamentations, and urging one another to hasten their steps. Among them the priest recognized a number of his neighbors who had lately died, and heard them bewailing the excruciating sufferings with which they were tormented for their evil deeds. They were followed by a troop of corpse-bearers, who were joined by the giant already mentioned. These carried as many as fifty biers, each of which was borne by two bearers. On these were seated a number of men of the size of dwarfs, but whose heads were as large as barrels. Two Ethiopians also carried an immense trunk of a tree, to which a poor wretch was rudely bound, who, in his tortures, filled the air with fearful cries of anguish; for a horrible demon sat on the same trunk and goaded his loins and back with red-hot spurs until the blood streamed from them. Walkelin distinctly recognized in this wretch the assassin of Stephen the priest, and was witness to the intolerable tortures he suffered for the innocent blood he shed two years before, since which he had died without penance for so foul a crime.

Then followed a crowd of women who seemed to the priest to be innumerable. They were mounted on horseback, riding in female fashion,

with women's saddles which were stuck with red-hot nails. The wind often lifted them a cubit from their saddles, and then let them drop again on the sharp points. Their haunches thus punctured with the burning nails, and suffering horrible torments from the wounds and the scorching heat, the women pitiably ejaculated, Woe! woe! and made open confession of the sins for which they were punished, undergoing in this manner fire and stench and unutterable tortures for the obscene allurements and filthy delights to which they had abandoned themselves when living among men. In this company the priest recognized several noble ladies, and beheld the palfreys and mules with the women's litters of others who were still alive.

The priest stood fixed to the spot at this spectacle, his thoughts deeply engaged in the reflections it suggested. Presently, however, he saw pass before him a numerous company of clergy and monks, with their rulers and judges, the bishops and abbots carrying crosiers in their hands. The clergy and bishops wore black copes, and the abbots and monks cowls of the same hue. They all groaned and wailed, and some of them called to Walkelin, and implored him, in the name of their former friendship, to pray for them. The priest reported that he saw among them many who were highly esteemed, and who, in human estimation, were now asso-

ciated with the saints in heaven. He recognized in the number Hugh, Bishop of Lisieux, and those eminent abbots, Manier of Evroult and Gerbert of Fontenelles, with many others whose names I either forget, or have no desire to publish. Human judgment is often infallible, but the eye of God seeth the inmost thoughts; for man looks only to outward appearances, God searcheth the heart. In the realms of eternal bliss the clear light of an endless day is shed on all around, and the children of the kingdom triumph in the joys which attend perfect holiness. Nothing that is unrighteous is done there; nothing that is polluted can enter there; no uncleanness, no impurity, is there found. All the dross of carnal desires is therefore consumed in the fires of purgatory, and purified by sufferings of various degrees as the Judge eternal ordains. So that as a vessel cleansed from rust and thoroughly polished is laid up in a treasury, so the soul, purified from all taint of sin, is admitted into Paradise, where it enjoys perfect happiness unalloyed by fear or care.

The priest, trembling at these appalling scenes, still rested on his staff, expecting apparitions still more terrible. And now there followed an immense army in which no color was visible, but only blackness and fiery flames. All were mounted on great war-horses, and fully armed as if they were prepared for immediate battle, and

they carried black banners. There were seen Richard and Baldwin, the sons of Count Gilbert, who were lately dead, with so many others that I cannot enumerate them. Among the rest was Landri of Orbec, who was killed the same year, and who accosted the priest, and, uttering horrible cries, charged him with his commissions, urgently begging him to carry a message to his wife. Upon this the troops who marched before and after him interrupted his cries, and said to the priest: "Believe not Landri, for he is a deceiver." This man had been a viscount and a lawyer, and had raised himself from a very low origin by his talents and merit. He decided causes and affairs according to his own pleasure, and perverted judgment for bribes, actuated more by avarice and duplicity than by a sense of what was right. He was therefore justly devoted to flagrant punishment, and publicly denounced by his associates as a liar. In this company no one flattered him, and no one had recourse to his cunning loquacity. He, who while it was in his power had shut his ears to the cries of the poor, was now in his torments, treated as an execrable wretch who was unfit to be heard.

Walkelin having seen these countless troops of soldiers pass, on reflection, said within himself: "Doubtless these are Harlequin's people; I have often heard of their being seen, but I laughed at the stories, having never had any certain

proofs of such things. Now, indeed, I assuredly behold the ghosts of the departed, but no one will believe me when I tell the tale, unless I can exhibit to mortal eyes some tangible proof of what I have seen. I will therefore mount one of the horses which are following the troop without any riders, and will take it home and show it my neighbors to convince them that I speak the truth." Accordingly, he forthwith snatched the reins of a black steed; but the animal burst violently from his hold, and galloped away among the troops of Ethiopians. The priest was disappointed at the failure of his enterprise; but he was young, bold, and light-hearted, as well as agile and strong. He therefore stationed himself in the middle of the path, prepared for action, and, the moment a horse came up, laid his hand upon it. The horse stopped, ready for him to mount without difficulty, at the same time snorting from his nostrils a cloud of vapor as large as a full-grown oak. The priest then placed his left foot in the stirrup, and, seizing the reins, laid his hand on the saddle; but he instantly felt that his foot rested on red-hot iron, and the hand with which he held the bridle was frozen with insupportable cold which penetrated to his vitals.

While this was passing, four terrific knights came up, and, uttering horrible cries, shouted to him: "What do you want with our horses?

You shall come with us. No one of our company had injured you, when you began laying your hands on what belongs to us." The priest, in great alarm, let go the horse, and three of the knights attempting to seize him, the fourth said to them: "Let him go, and allow me to speak with him, for I wish to make him the bearer of a message to my wife and children." He then said to the priest, who stood trembling with fright: "Listen to me, I beseech you, and tell my wife what I say." The priest replied: "I know not who you are, or who is your wife." The knight then said: "I am William de Glos, son of Barno, and was once the renowned steward of William de Breteuil and his father William, Earl of Hereford? While in the world I abandoned myself to evil deeds and plunder, and was guilty of more crimes than can be recounted. But, above all, I am tormented for my usuries. I once lent money to a poor man, and received as security a mill which belonged to him, and, as he was not able to discharge the debt, I kept the mortgage property and left it to my heirs, disinheriting my debtor's family. You see that I have in my mouth a bar of hot iron from the mill, the weight of which I feel to be more oppressive than the tower of Rouen. Tell, therefore, my wife Beatrice, and my son Roger, to afford me relief by speedily restoring to the right heir the pledge, from which they have received more than

I advanced." The priest replied: "William de Glos died long ago, and this is a commission which no Christian man can undertake. I know neither who you are, nor who are your heirs. If I should venture to tell such a tale to Roger de Glos, or his brothers, or to their mother, they would laugh me to scorn, as one out of his wits." However, William continued still to persist in his earnest entreaties, and furnished him with many sure and well-known tokens of his identity. The priest understood very well all he heard, but pretended not to comprehend it. At length, overcome by importunities, he consented to what the knight requested, and engaged to do what was required. Upon this, William repeated again all he had said, and impressed it upon his companion during a long conversation. The priest, however, began to consider that he durst not convey to any one the execrable message of a damned spirit. "It is not right," he said, "to publish such things; I will on no account tell to any one what you require of me." Upon this, the knight was filled with rage, and, seizing him by the throat, dragged him along on the ground, uttering terrible imprecations. The prisoner felt the hand which grasped him burning like fire, and in this deep extremity cried aloud: "Help me, O holy Mary, the glorious mother of Christ!" No sooner had he invoked the compassionate mother than the aid of the Son of God was af-

forded him, according to the Almighty's disposing will. For a horseman immediately rode up, with a sword in his right hand, and, brandishing it over Roger's head, exclaimed: "Will ye kill my brother, ye accursed ones? Loose him and begone!" The knights instantly fled and followed the black troops.

When they had all passed by, the horseman, remaining alone in the road with Walkelin, said to him, "Do you not know me?" The priest answered, "No." The other said: "I am Robert, son of Ralph le Blond, and your brother." The priest was much astonished at this unexpected occurrence, and much troubled at what he had seen and heard, as we have just related, when the knight began to remind him of a number of things which happened in their youth, and to give him many well-known tokens. The priest had a clear recollection of all that was told him, but not daring to confess it, he stoutly denied all knowledge of the circumstances. At length the knight said to him: "I am astonished at your hardness of heart and stupidity; it was I who brought you up on our parents' death, and loved you more than any one living. I sent you to school in France, supplied you plentiful with clothes and money, and did all in my power to benefit you in every way. You seem now to have forgotten all this, and will not even condescend to recognize me." At length the priest, after be-

ing abundantly furnished with exact particulars, became convinced by such certain proofs, and, bursting into tears, openly admitted the truth of what he had heard. His brother then said: "You deserve to die, and to be dragged with us to partake of the torments we suffer, because you have rashly laid hands on things which belong to our reprobate crew; no other living man ever dared to make such an attempt. But the mass you sang to-day has saved you from perishing. It is also permitted me thus to appear to you, and unfold to you my wretched condition. After I had conferred with you in Normandy, I took leave of you and crossed over to England, where, by the Creator's order, my life ended, and I have undergone intense suffering for the grievous sins with which I was burdened. It is flaming armor which you see us bear, it poisons us with an infernal stench, weighs us down with its intolerable weight, and scorches us with heat which is inextinguishable! Hitherto I have been tormented with unutterable sufferings, but when you were ordained in England, and sang your first mass for the faithful departed, your father Ralph was released from Purgatory, and my shield, which was a great torment to me, fell from my arm. I still, as you see, carry a sword, but I confidently expect to be relieved of that burden in the course of a year."

While the knight was thus talking, the priest,

attentively listening to him, espied a mass of clotted gore, in the shape of a man's head, at the other's heels, round his spurs, and in great amazement said to him: "Whose is this clotted blood which clings to your spurs?" The knight replied: "It is not blood, but fire; and it weighs me down more than if I had Mount St. Michael to carry. Once I used sharp and bright spurs when I was hurrying to shed blood, and now I justly carry this enormous weight at my heels, which is so intolerably burdensome, that I am unable to express the severity of my sufferings. Men ought to reflect on these things without ceasing, and to dread and beware, lest they, for their sins, should undergo such chastisements. I am not permitted, my brother, to converse longer with you, for I must hasten to follow this unhappy troop. Remember me, I pray you, and give me the succor of your prayers and alms. In one year after Palm Sunday I trust to be saved, and by the mercy of the Creator released from all my torments. And you, consider well your own state, and prudently mend your life, which is blemished by many vices, for know, it will not be very long. Now be silent, bury in your own bosom the things you have so unexpectedly seen and heard, and do not venture to tell them to any one for three days."

With these words the knight hastened away. The priest was seriously ill for a whole week; as

soon as he began to recover his strength, he went to Lisieux and related all that had happened to Bishop Gilbert in regular order, and obtained, on his petition, the salutary remedies he needed. He afterward lived in good health almost fifteen years, and I heard what I have written, and more which has escaped my memory, from his own mouth, and saw the mark on his face left by the hand of the terrible knight. I have committed the account to writing for the edification of my readers, that the righteous may be confirmed in their good resolutions, and the wicked repent of their evil deeds.

FROM THE LIFE OF ST. BRANDAN

Edited by Thomas Wright.

Saynt Brandon, the holy man, was a monke, and borne in Yrlonde, and there he was abbot of an hous wherein were a thousand monkes, and there he ladde a full strayte and holy lyfe, in grete penaunce and abstynence, and he governed his monkes ful vertuously. And than within shorte tyme after, there came to hym an holy abbot that hyght Beryne to vysyte hym, and eche of them was joyfull of other; and than saynt Brandon began to tell to the abbot Beryne of many wonders that he had seen in dyverse londes. And whan Beryne herde that of saynt Brandon, he

began to sygh, and sore wepte. And saynt Brandon comforted him in the best wyse he coude, sayenge, "Ye come hyther for to be joyfull with me, and therfore for Goddes love leve your mournynge, and tell me what mervayles ye have seen in the grete see occean, that compasseth all the worlde aboute, and all other waters comen out of hym, whiche renneth in all the partyes of the erth."

And than Beryne began to tell to saynt Brandon and to his monkes the mervaylles that he had seen, full sore wepynge, and sayd, "I have a sone, his name is Meruoke, and he was a monke of grete fame, whiche had grete desyre to seke aboute by shyppe in dyverse countrees, to fynde a solytary place wherein he myght dwell secretly out of the besynesse of the worlde, for to serve God quyetly with more devocyon; and I counseyled hym to sayle into an ylonde ferre in the see, besydes the Mountaynes of Stones, whiche is ful well knowen, and than he made hym redy and sayled thyder with his monkes. And whan he came thyder, he lyked that place full well, where he and his monkes served our Lorde full devoutly." And than Beryne sawe in a visyon that this monke Meruoke was sayled ryght ferre eestwarde into the see more than thre dayes saylynge, and sodeynly to his semynge there came a derke cloude and overcovered them, that a grete parte of the daye they sawe no lyght; and as our

Lorde wold, the cloude passed awaye, and they sawe a full fayr ylond, and thyderwarde they drewe. In that ylonde was joye and myrth ynough, and all the erth of that ylonde shyned as bryght as the sonne, and there were the fayrest trees and herbes that ever ony man sawe, and there were many precyous stones shynynge bryght, and every herbe there was ful of fygures, and every tree ful of fruyte; so that it was a glorious sight, and an hevenly joye to abyde there. And than there came to them a fayre yonge man, and full curtoysly he welcomed them all, and called every monke by his name, and sayd that they were much bounde to prayse the name of our Lorde Jesu, that wold of his grace shewe to them that glorious place, where is ever day, and never night, and this place is called paradyse terrestre. But by this ylonde is an other ylonde wherein no man may come. And this yonge man sayd to them, "Ye have ben here halfe a yere without meet, drynke, or slepe." And they supposed that they had not ben there the space of half an houre, so mery and joyfull they were there. And the yonge man tolde them that this is the place that Adam and Eve dwelte in fyrst, and ever should have dwelled here, yf that they had not broken the commaundement of God. And than the yonge man brought them to theyr shyppe agayn, and sayd they might no lenger abyde there; and whan they were all shypped,

sodeynly this yonge man vanysshed away out of theyr sight. And than within shorte tyme after, by the purveyaunce of our Lorde Jesu, they came to the abbey where saynt Brandon dwelled, and than he with his bretherne receyved them goodly, and demaunded where they had ben so longe; and they sayd, "We have ben in the Londe of Byheest, to-fore the gates of Paradyse, where as is ever daye, and never night." And they sayd all that the place is full delectable, for yet all theyr clothes smelled of the swete and joyfull place. And than saynt Brandon purposed soone after for to seke that place by Goddes helpe, and anone began to purvey for a good shyppe, and a stronge, and vytaylled it for vij. yere; and than he toke his leve of all his bretherne, and toke xij. monkes with him. But or they entred into the shyppe they fasted xl. dayes, and lyved devoutly, and eche of them receyved the sacrament. And whan saynt Brandon with his xij. monkes were entred into the shyppe, there came other two of his monkes, and prayed hym that they might sayle with hym. And than he sayd, "Ye may sayle with me, but one of you shall go to hell, or ye come agayn." But not for that they wold go with hym.

And than saynt Brandon badde the shypmen to wynde up the sayle, and forth they sayled in Goddes name, so that on the morow they were out of syght of ony londe; and xl. dayes and xl.

nightes after they sayled playn eest, and than they sawe an ylonde ferre fro them, and they sayled thyder-warde as fast as they coude, and they sawe a grete roche of stone appere above all the water, and thre dayes they sayled aboute it or they coude gete in to the place. But at the last, by the purveyaunce of God, they founde a lytell haven, and there went a-londe every-chone. . . .

And than they sayled forth, and came soone after to that lond; but bycause of lytell depthe in some place, and in some place were grete rockes, but at the last they wente upon an ylonde, wenynge to them they had ben safe, and made theron a fyre for to dresse theyr dyner, but saynt Brandon abode styll in the shyppe. And whan the fyre was ryght hote, and the meet nygh soden, than this ylonde began to move; wherof the monkes were aferde, and fledde anone to the shyppe, and lefte the fyre and meet behynde them, and mervayled sore of the movyng. And saynt Brandon comforted them, and sayd that it was a grete fisshe named Jasconye, whiche laboureth nyght and daye to put his tayle in his mouth, but for gretnes he may not. And than anone they sayled west thre dayes and thre nyghtes or they sawe only londe, wherfore they were ryght hevy. But soone after, as God wold, they sawe a fayre ylonde, full of floures, herbes, and trees, wherof they thanked God of his good

grace, and anone they went on londe. And whan they had gone longe in this, they founde a full fayre well, and therby stode a fayre tree, full of bowes, and on every bough sate a fayre byrde, and they sate so thycke on the tree that unneth ony lefe of the tree myght be seen, the nombre of them was so grete, and they songe so meryly that it was an hevenly noyse to here. Wherfore saynt Brandon kneled down on his knees, and wepte for joye, and made his prayers devoutly unto our Lord God to knowe what these byrdes ment. And than anone one of the byrdes fledde fro the tree to saynt Brandon, and he with flykerynge of his wynges made a full mery noyse lyke a fydle, that hym semed he herde never so joyfull a melodye. And than saynt Brandon commaunded the byrde to tell hym the cause why they sate so thycke on the tree, and sange so meryly. And than the byrde sayd, "Somtyme we were aungels in heven, but whan our mayster Lucyfer fell down into hell for his hygh pryde, we fell with hym for our offences, some hyther, and some lower, after the qualyté of theyr trespace; and bycause our trespace is but lytell, therfore our Lorde hath set us here out of all pyane in full grete joye and myrth, after his pleasynge, here to serve hym on this tree in the best maner that we can. The Sonday is a day of rest fro all worldly occupacyon, and therfore, that daye all we be made as whyte as ony snow, for to

prayse our Lorde in the best wyse we may." And than this byrde sayd to saynt Brandon, "It is xij. monethes past that ye departed fro your abbey, and in the vij. yere hereafter ye shall se the place that ye desyre to come, and all this vij. yere ye shal kepe your Eester here with us every yere, and in the ende of the vij. yere ye shal come into the Londe of Byhest." And this was on Eester daye that the byrde sayd these wordes to saynt Brandon. And than this fowle flewe agayn to his felawes that sate on the tree. And than all the byrdes began to synge evensonge so meryly, that it was an hevenly noyse to here; and after souper saynt Brandon and his felawes wente to bedde, and slepte well, and on the morowe they arose betymes, and than those byrdes began matyns, pryme, and houres, and all suche service as Chrysten men use to synge. . . .

And seven dayes they sayled alwaye in that clere water. And than there came a south wynde and drove the shyppe north-warde, where as they sawe an ylonde full derke and full of stenche and smoke; and there they herde grete blowynge and blastyng of belowes, but they myght se no thynge, but herde grete thondrynge, wherof they were sore aferde and blyssed them ofte. And soone after there came one stertynge out all brennynge in fyre, and stared full gastly on them with grete staryng eyen, of whome the monkes were agast, and at his departyng from them he

made the horryblest crye that myght be herde. And soone there came a grete nombre of fendes and assayled them with hokes and brennynge yren malles, whiche ranne on the water, folowyng fast theyr shyppe, in suche wyse that it semed all the see to be on a fyre; but by the wyll of God they had no power to hurte ne to greve them, ne theyr shyppe. Wherfore the fendes began to rore and crye, and threwe theyr hokes and malles at them. And they than were sore aferde, and prayed to God for comforte and helpe; for they sawe the fendes all about the shyppe, and them semed that all the ylonde and the see to be on a fyre. And with a sorowfull crye all the fendes departed fro them and returned to the place that they came fro. And than saynt Brandon tolde to them that this was a parte of hell, and therfore he charged them to be stedfast in the fayth, for they shold yet se many a dredefull place or they came home agayne. And than came the south wynde and drove them ferther into the north, where they sawe an hyll all on fyre, and a foule smoke and stenche comyng from thens, and the fyre stode on eche syde of the hyll lyke a wall all brennynge. And than one of his monkes began to crye and wepe ful sore, and sayd that his ende was comen, and that he might abyde no lenger in the shyppe, and anone he lepte out of the shyppe into the see, and than he cryed and rored full pyteously,

cursynge the tyme that he was borne, and also fader and moder that bygate him, bycause they sawe no better to his correccyon in his yonge age, "for now I must go to perpetual payne." And than the sayenge of saynt Brandon was veryfyed that he sayd to hym whan he entred into the shyppe. Therfore it is good a man to do penaunce and forsake synne, for the houre of deth is incertayne.

And than anone the wynde turned into the north, and drove the shyppe into the south, whiche sayled vij. dayes contynually; and they came to a grete rocke standynge in the see, and theron sate a naked man in full grete mysery and payne; for the wawes of the see had so beten his body that all the flesshe was gone of, and nothynge lefte but synewes and bare bones. And whan the wawes were gone, there was a canvas that henge over his heed whiche bette his body full sore with the blowynge of the wynde; and also there were two oxe tongues and a grete stone that he sate on, whiche dyd hym full grete ease. And than saynt Brandon charged hym to tell hym what he was. And he sayd, "My name is Judas, that solde our Lorde Jesu Chryst for xxx. pens, whiche sytteth here moche wretchedly, how be it I am worthy to be in the gretest payne that is; but our Lorde is so mercyfull that he hath rewarded me better than I have deserved, for of ryght my place is in the brennynge hell; but I

am here but certayne tymes of the yere, that is, fro Chrystmasse to twelfth daye, and fro Eester tyll Whytsontyde be past, and every feestfull daye of our lady, and every Saterdaye at noone tyll Sonday that evensonge be done; but all other tymes I lye styll in hell in ful brennynge fyre with Pylate, Herode, and Cayphas; therefore accursed be the tyme that ever I knewe them." And than Judas prayed saynt Brandon to abyde styll there all that nyght, and that he wolde kepe hym there styll that the fendes sholde not fetche hym to hell. And he sayd, "With Goddes helpe thou shalt abyde here all this nyght." And than he asked Judas what cloth that was that henge over his heed. And he sayd it was a cloth that he gave unto a lepre, whiche was bought with the money that he stale fro our Lorde whan he bare his purse, "wherfore it dothe to me grete payne now in betyng my face with the blowynge of the wynde; and these two oxe tongues that hange here above me, I gave them somtyme to two preestes to praye for me. I bought them with myne owne money, and therfore they ease me, bycause the fysshes of the see knawe on them and spare me. And this stone that I syt on laye somtyme in a desolate place where it eased no man; and I toke it thens and layd it in a foule waye, where it dyd moche ease to them that went by that waye, and therfore it easeth me now; for every good dede shall be rewarded, and every

evyll dede shal be punysshed." And the Sondaye agaynst even there came a grete multitude of fendes blastyng and rorynge, and badde saynt Brandon go thens, that they myght have theyr servaunt Judas, "for we dare not come in the presence of our mayster, but yf we brynge hym to hell with us." And saynt Brandon sayd, "I lette not you do your maysters commaundement, but by the power of our Lorde Jesu Chryst I charge you to leve hym this nyght tyll to morow." "How darest thou helpe hym that so solde his mayster for xxx. pens to the Jewes, and caused hym also to dye the moost shamefull deth upon the crosse?" And than saynt Brandon charged the fendes by his passyon that they sholde not noy hym that nyght. And than the fendes went theyr way rorynge and cryenge towarde hell to theyr mayster, the grete devyll. And than Judas thanked saynt Brandon so rewfully that it was pité to se, and on the morowe the fendes came with an horryble noyse, sayenge that they had that nyght suffred grete payne bycause they brought not Judas, and sayd that he shold suffre double payne the sixe dayes folowynge. And they toke than Judas tremblynge for fere with them to payne.

ICELANDIC VISION

From the Poetic Edda. Tr. by Wright, St. Patrick's Purgatory, p. 177.

In the Norni's seat
sat I nine days;
thence I was carried on a horse;
the sun of the Gygiars
shone grimly
out of the apertures of the clouds.

Without and within
I seemed to go through all
the seven lower worlds;
above and below
sought I a better way,
where I might have a more agreeable journey.

I must relate
what I first saw,
when I was come into the places of torment;
scorched birds,
which were souls,
fled numerous as flies.

From the west saw I fly
the dragons of expectation,
and open the way of the fire-powerful;
they beat their wings,
so that everywhere it appeared to me
that earth and heaven burst.

The sun's hart
I saw go from the south,
him led two together:
his feet
stood on the ground,
and his horns touched heaven.

From the north saw I ride
the people's sons,
and they were seven together;
with full horns
they drunk the pure mead
from the fountain of heaven's lord.

The wind became quiet,
the waters ceased to flow;
then heard I a fearful sound:
for their husbands
shameless women
ground earth to food.

Bloody stones
those dark women
dragged sorrowfully;
their bleeding hearts hung
out of their breasts,
weary with much grief.

Many men saw I
wounded go
in the ways strewed with hot cinders;
their faces
seemed to me all to be
red with smoking blood.

Many men saw I
go on the ground
who had been unable to obtain the Lord's meal;
heathen stars
stood over their heads,
painted with fearful characters.

Those men saw I,
who cherish much
envy at other's fortune;
bloody runes
were on their breasts
marked painfully.

Men saw I there
many, without joy,

who all wandered pathless;
that he purchases for himself,
who of this world
is infatuated with the vices.

Those men saw I,
who in many ways
laid their hands on other's property;
they went in flocks
to Fegiarn's (Satan's) city,
and had burthens of lead.

Those men saw I,
who many had
deprived of money and life;
through their breasts
suddenly pierced
strong venemous dragons.

Those men saw I,
who would not
keep holy days;
their hands
were on hot stones
nailed tight.

Those men saw I,
who in much pride
magnified themselves too much;
their garments
were in derision
with fire surrounded.

Those men saw I,
who had many
words against another lied:
hell's ravens
out of their heads
cruelly tore their eyes.

All the horrors
you cannot know
which the hell-goers have.
Sweet sins
go to cruel recompenses;
ever cometh moan after pleasure.

Those men saw I
who much had
given according to God's laws;
clear candles
were over their heads
burning brightly.

Those men saw I,
who magnanimously
improved the condition of the poor;
angels read
the holy books
over their heads.

Those men saw I,
who had much
their body lean with fasting;
God's angels
bowed before all these;
that is the greatest pleasure.

Those men saw I,
who to their mother had
put food in the mouth;
their resting-places were
in the beams of heaven
placed agreeably.

Holy virgins
had purely
washed the soul of sins,
of those men
who many a day
punish themselves.

Lofty cars
I saw go midst heaven,
which had the roads to God;
men guide them
who were slain
entirely without fault.

O mighty Father,
most great Son,
Holy Ghost of heaven,
I pray thee to save
(who didst create)
us all from miseries!

ANGLO-SAXON DESCRIPTION OF PARADISE

From The Phœnix, a Paraphrase of the *Carmen de Phœnice*, ascribed to Lactantius Codex Exoniensis. Tr. by B. Thorpe, p. 197.

I have heard tell,
that there is far hence
in eastern parts
a land most noble,
amongst men renowned.
That tract of earth is not
over mid-earth
fellow to many
peopled lands;
but it is withdrawn
through the Creator's might
from wicked doers.
Beauteous is all the plain,
with delights blessed,
with the sweetest
of earth's odors:
unique is that island,
noble the Maker,
lofty, in powers abounding,
who the land founded.
There is oft open
towards the happy,
unclosed, (delight of sounds!)
heaven-kingdom's door.
That is a pleasant plain,
green wolds,
spacious under heaven;
there may not rain nor snow,
nor rage of frost,
nor fire's blast,
nor fall of hail,
nor descent of rime,
nor heat of sun,
nor perpetual cold,
nor warm weather,
nor winter shower,
aught injure;
but the plain rests
happy and healthful.
That noble land is
with blossoms flowered:
nor hills nor mountains there
stand steep,
nor stony cliffs
tower high,
as here with us;
nor dells nor dales,
nor mountain-caves,
risings nor hilly chains;
nor thereon rests
aught unsmooth,
but the noble field
flourishes under the skies
with delights blooming.
That glorious land is
higher by twelve
fold of fathom measure,
(as us the skilful have informed,
sages through wisdom
in writings show,)
than any of those hills
that brightly here with us
tower high,
under the stars of heaven.
Serene is the glorious plain,
the sunny bower glitters,
the woody holt, joyously;
the fruits fall not,
the bright products,
but the trees ever
stand green,
as them God hath commanded;
in winter and in summer
the forest is alike
hung with fruits,
never fade
the leaves in air,
nor will flame them injure,
ever throughout ages,

ere that an end
to the world shall be.
What time of old the water's mass
all mid-earth,
the sea-flood decked
the earth's circumference,
then the noble plain
in all ways secure
against the billowy course
stood preserved,
of the rough waves,
happy, inviolate,
through God's favor:
it shall abide thus blooming,
until the coming of the fire
of the Lord's doom;
when the death-houses,
men's dark chambers,
shall be opened.
There is not in that land
hateful enmity,
nor wail nor vengeance,
evil-token none,
old age nor misery,
nor the narrow death,
nor loss of life,
nor coming of enemy,
nor sin nor strife,
nor painful exile,
nor poor one's toil,
nor desire of wealth,
nor care nor sleep,
nor grievous sickness,
nor winter's darts,
nor dread of tempests
rough under heaven,
nor the hard frost
with cold chill icicles
striketh any.
There nor hail nor rime
on the land descend,
nor windy cloud,
nor there water falls
agitated in air,
but there liquid streams
wonderously curious,
wells spring forth
with fair bubblings from earth;
o'er the soil glide
pleasant waters
from the wood's midst;
there each month
from the turf of earth
sea-cold they burst,
all the grove pervade
at times abundantly.
It is God's behest,
that twelve times
the glorious land
sports over
the joy of water-floods.
The groves are
with produce hung,
with beauteous fruits;
there wane not
holy under heaven
the holt's decorations,
nor fall there on earth
the fallow blossoms,
beauty of forest-trees,
but there wonderously
on the trees ever
the laden branches,
the renovated fruit,
at all times
on the grassy plain
stand green,
gloriously adorned
through the Holy's might,
brightest of groves!
Not broken is
the wood in aspect:
there a holy fragrance
rests o'er the pleasant land.
That shall not be changed
forever throughout ages,
until shall end
his wise work of yore
he who at first created it.

THE HERO AS POET

From Heroes and Hero Worship, by Thomas Carlyle.

Many volumes have been written by way of commentary on Dante and his Book; yet, on the whole, with no great result. His biography is, as it were, irrecoverably lost for us. An unimportant, wandering, sorrow-stricken man, not much note was taken of him while he lived; and the most of that has vanished, in the long space that now intervenes. It is five centuries since he ceased writing and living here. After all commentaries, the Book itself is mainly what we know of him. The Book,—and one might add that Portrait commonly attributed to Giotto, which, looking on it, you cannot help inclining to think genuine, whoever did it. To me it is a most touching face; perhaps, of all faces that I know, the most so. Lonely there, painted as on vacancy, with the simple laurel wound round it; the deathless sorrow and pain, the known victory which is also deathless;—significant of the whole history of Dante! I think it is the mournfulest face that ever was painted from reality; an altogether tragic, heart-affecting face. There is in it, as foundation of it, the softness, tenderness, gentle affection as of a child; but all this is as if congealed into sharp contradiction, into abnegation, isolation, proud, hopeless pain.

A soft, ethereal soul looking out so stern, implacable, grim-trenchant, as from imprisonment of thick-ribbed ice! Withal it is a silent pain too, a silent, scornful one: the lip is curled in a kind of godlike disdain of the thing that is eating out his heart,—as if it were withal a mean, insignificant thing, as if he whom it had power to torture and strangle were greater than it. The face of one wholly in protest, and life-long, unsurrendering battle, against the world. Affection all converted into indignation; and implacable indignation; slow, equal, silent, like that of a god! The eye too, it looks out as in a kind of *surprise,* a kind of inquiry, Why the world was of such a sort? This is Dante: so he looks, this "voice of ten silent centuries," and sings us "his mystic, unfathomable song."

The little that we know of Dante's Life corresponds well enough with this Portrait and this Book. He was born at Florence, in the upper class of society, in the year 1265. His education was the best then going; much school-divinity, Aristotelean logic, some Latin classics,—no inconsiderable insight into certain provinces of things; and Dante, with his earnest, intelligent nature, we need not doubt, learned better than most all that was learnable. He has a clear cultivated understanding, and of great subtlety; this best fruit of education he had contrived to realize from these scholastics. He knows accurately and

well what lies close to him; but in such a time, without printed books or free intercourse, he could not know well what was distant: the small, clear light, most luminous for what is near, breaks itself into singular *chiaroscuro* striking on what is far off. This was Dante's learning from the schools. In life, he had gone through the usual destinies;—been twice out campaigning as a soldier for the Florentine state; been on embassy; had in his thirty-fifth year, by natural gradation of talent and service, become one of the chief magistrates of Florence. He had met in boyhood a certain Beatrice Portinari, a beautiful little girl of his own age and rank, and grown up thenceforth in partial sight of her, in some distant intercourse with her. All readers know his graceful, affecting account of this; and then of their being parted; of her being wedded to another, and of her death soon after. She makes a great figure in Dante's Poems; seems to have made a great figure in his life. Of all beings it might seem as if she, held apart from him, far apart at last in the dim Eternity, were the only one he had ever with his whole strength of affection loved. She died: Dante himself was wedded; but it seems not happily, far from happily. I fancy, the rigorous, earnest man, with his keen excitabilities, was not altogether easy to make happy.

We will not complain of Dante's miseries: had

all gone right with him as he wished it, he might have been Prior, Podestà, or whatsoever they call it, of Florence, well accepted among neighbors, —and the world had wanted one of the most notable words ever spoken or sung. Florence would have had another prosperous Lord Mayor; and the ten dumb centuries continued voiceless, and the ten other listening centuries (for there will be ten of them and more) had no *Divina Commedia* to hear! We will complain of nothing. A nobler destiny was appointed for this Dante; and he, struggling like a man led towards death and crucifixion, could not help fulfilling it. Give *him* the choice of his happiness! He knew not, more than we do, what was really happy, what was really miserable.

In Dante's Priorship, the Guelph-Ghibelline, Bianchi-Neri, or some other confused disturbances, rose to such a height, that Dante, whose party had seemed the stronger, was with his friends cast unexpectedly forth into banishment; doomed thenceforth to a life of woe and wandering. His property was all confiscated, and more; he had the fiercest feeling that it was entirely unjust, nefarious in the sight of God and man. He tried what was in him to get reinstated; tried even by warlike surprisal, with arms in his hand: but it would not do; bad only had become worse. There is a record, I believe, still extant in the Florence Archives, dooming this

Dante, wheresoever caught, to be burnt alive. Burnt alive; so it stands, they say: a very curious civic document. Another curious document, some considerable number of years later, is a Letter of Dante's to the Florentine Magistrates, written in answer to a milder proposal of theirs, that he should return on condition of apologizing and paying a fine. He answers, with fixed, stern pride: "If I cannot return without calling myself guilty, I will never return, *nunquam revertar.*"

For Dante there was now no home in this world. He wandered from patron to patron, from place to place; proving, in his own bitter words, "How hard is the path, *Come è duro calle.*" The wretched are not cheerful company. Dante, poor and banished, with his proud, earnest nature, with his moody humors, was not a man to conciliate men. Petrarch reports of him, that being at Can della Scala's court, and blamed one day for his gloom and taciturnity, he answered in no courtier-like way. Della Scala stood among his courtiers, with mimes and buffoons (*nebulones ac histriones*) making him heartily merry; when, turning to Dante, he said: "Is it not strange, now, that this poor fool should make himself so entertaining; while you, a wise man, sit there day after day, and have nothing to amuse us with at all?" Dante answered bitterly: "No, not strange; your High-

ness is to recollect the proverb, *Like to Like*"; —given the amuser, the amusee must also be given! Such a man, with his proud, silent ways, with his sarcasms and sorrows, was not made to succeed at court. By degrees, it came to be evident to him that he had no longer any resting-place, or hope of benefit, in this earth. The earthly world had cast him forth, to wander; no living heart to love him now; for his sore miseries there was no solace here.

The deeper naturally would the Eternal World impress itself on him; that awful reality over which, after all, this Time-world, with its Florences and banishments, only flutters as an unreal shadow. Florence thou shalt never see: but Hell and Purgatory and Heaven thou shalt surely see! What is Florence, Can della Scala, and the World and Life altogether? ETERNITY: thither, of a truth, not elsewhither, art thou and all things bound! The great soul of Dante, homeless on earth, made its home more and more in that awful other world. Naturally his thoughts brooded on that, as on the one fact important for him. Bodied or bodiless, it is the one fact important for all men: but to Dante, in that age, it was bodied in fixed certainty of scientific shape; he no more doubted of that *Malebolge* Pool, that it all lay there with its gloomy circles, with its *alti guai*, and that he himself should see it, than we doubt that we should see Constantinople if we went

thither. Dante's heart, long filled with this, brooding over it in speechless thought and awe, bursts forth at length into "mystic, unfathomable song"; and this his *Divine Comedy*, the most remarkable of all modern Books, is the result. It must have been a great solacement to Dante, and was, as we can see, a proud thought for him at times, that he, here in exile, could do this work; that no Florence, nor no man or men, could hinder him from doing it, or even much help him in doing it. He knew too, partly, that it was great; the greatest a man could do. "If thou follow thy star, *Se tu segui tua stella*,"—so could the Hero, in his forsakenness, in his extreme need, still say to himself: "Follow thou thy star, thou shalt not fail of a glorious haven!" The labor of writing, we find, and indeed could know otherwise, was great and painful for him; he says, This Book "which has made me lean for many years." Ah yes, it was won, all of it, with pain and sore toil,—not in sport, but in grim earnest. His Book, as indeed most good Books are, has been written, in many senses, with his heart's blood. It is his whole history this Book. He died after finishing it; not yet very old, at the age of fifty-six;—broken-hearted rather, as is said. He lies buried in his death-city Ravenna: *Hic claudor Dantes patriis extorris ab orris.* The Florentines begged back his body, in a century after; the Ravenna people would not give

it. "Here am I Dante laid, shut out from my native shores."

I said, Dante's Poem was a Song: it is Tieck who calls it "a mystic, unfathomable Song"; and such is literally the character of it. Coleridge remarks very pertinently somewhere, that wherever you find a sentence musically worded, of true rhythm and melody in the words, there is something deep and good in the meaning too. For body and soul, word and idea, go strangely together here as everywhere. Song: we said before, it was the Heroic of Speech! All *old* Poems, Homer's and the rest, are authentically Songs. I would say, in strictness, that all right Poems are; that whatsoever is not *sung* is properly no Poem, but a piece of Prose cramped into jingling lines,—to the great injury of the grammar, to the great grief of the reader, for most part! What we want to get at is the *thought* the man had, if he had any: why should he twist it into jingle, if he could speak it out plainly? It is only when the heart of him is rapt into true passion of melody, and the very tones of him, according to Coleridge's remark, become musical by the greatness, depth, and music of his thoughts, that we can give him right to rhyme and sing; that we call him a Poet, and listen to him as the Heroic of Speakers,—whose speech *is* Song. Pretenders to this are many; and to an earnest reader, I doubt, it is for most part a very

melancholy, not to say an insupportable business, that of reading rhyme! Rhyme that had no inward necessity to be rhymed;—it ought to have told us plainly, without any jingle, what it was aiming at. I would advise all men who *can* speak their thought, not to sing it; to understand that, in a serious time, among serious men, there is no vocation in them for singing it. Precisely as we love the true song, and are charmed by it as by something divine, so shall we hate the false song, and account it a mere wooden noise, a thing hollow, superfluous, altogether an insincere and offensive thing.

I give Dante my highest praise when I say of his *Divine Comedy* that it is, in all senses, genuinely a Song. In the very sound of it there is a *canto fermo;* it proceeds as by a chant. The language, his simple *terza rima,* doubtless helped him in this. One reads along naturally with a sort of *lilt.* But I add, that it could not be otherwise; for the essence and material of the work are themselves rhythmic. Its depth, and rapt passion and sincerity, makes it musical;—go *deep* enough, there is music everywhere. A true inward symmetry, what one calls an architectural harmony, reigns in it, proportionates it all: architectural; which also partakes of the character of music. The three kingdoms, *Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso,* look out on one another like com-

partments of a great edifice; a great supernatural world-cathedral, piled up there, stern, solemn, awful; Dante's World of Souls! It is, at bottom, the *sincerest* of all Poems; sincerity, here too, we find to be the measure of worth. It came deep out of the author's heart of hearts; and it goes deep, and through long generations, into ours. The people of Verona, when they saw him on the streets, used to say: *"Eccovi l' uom ch' è stato all' Inferno,* See, there is the man that was in Hell!" Ah, yes, he had been in Hell;—in Hell enough, in long, severe sorrow and struggle; as the like of him is pretty sure to have been. Commedias that come out *divine* are not accomplished otherwise. Thought, true labor of any kind, highest virtue itself, is it not the daughter of Pain? Born as out of the black whirlwind; true *effort,* in fact, as of a captive struggling to free himself: that is Thought. In all ways we are "to become perfect through *suffering.*"—But, as I say, no work known to me is so elaborated as this of Dante's. It has all been as if molten, in the hottest furnace of his soul. It had made him "lean" for many years. Not the general whole only; every compartment of it is worked out, with intense earnestness, into truth, into clear visuality. Each answers to the other; each fits in its place, like a marble stone accurately hewn and polished. It is the soul of Dante, and in this the

soul of the Middle Ages, rendered forever rhythmically visible there. No light task; a right intense one: but a task which is *done*.

Perhaps one would say, *intensity*, with the much that depends on it, is the prevailing character of Dante's genius. Dante does not come before us as a large catholic mind; rather as a narrow, and even sectarian mind: it is partly the fruit of his age and position, but partly too of his own nature. His greatness has, in all senses, concentred itself into fiery emphasis and depth. He is world-great not because he is world-wide, but because he is world-deep. Through all objects he pierces as it were down into the heart of Being. I know nothing so intense as Dante. Consider, for example, to begin with the outermost development of his intensity, consider how he paints. He has a great power of vision; seizes the very type of a thing; presents that and nothing more. You remember that first view he gets of the Hall of Dite: *red* pinnacle, red-hot cone of iron glowing through the dim immensity of gloom; so vivid, so distinct, visible at once and forever! It is an emblem of the whole genius of Dante. There is a brevity, an abrupt precision in him: Tacitus is not briefer, more condensed; and then in Dante it seems a natural condensation, spontaneous to the man. One smiting word; and then there is silence, nothing more said. His silence is more eloquent than words.

It is strange with what a sharp, decisive grace he snatches the true likeness of a matter; cuts into the matter as with a pen of fire. Plutus, the blustering giant, collapses at Virgil's rebuke; it is "as the sails sink, the mast being suddenly broken." Or that poor Brunetto, with the *cotto aspetto,* "face *baked,*" parched brown and lean; and the "fiery snow" that falls on them there, a "fiery snow without wind," slow, deliberate, never-ending! Or the lids of those Tombs; square sarcophaguses, in that silent dim-burning Hell, each with its Soul in torment; the lids laid open there; they are to be shut at the Day of Judgment, through Eternity. And how Farinata rises; and how Cavalcante falls— at hearing of his Son, and the past tense *"fue!"* The very movements in Dante have something brief; swift, decisive, almost military. It is of the inmost essence of his genius this sort of painting. The fiery, swift Italian nature of the man, so silent, passionate, with its quick abrupt movements, its silent "pale rages," speaks itself in these things.

For though this of painting is one of the outermost developments of a man, it comes like all else from the essential faculty of him; it is physiognomical of the whole man. Find a man whose words paint you a likeness, you have found a man worth something; mark his manner of doing it, as very characteristic of him. In the first place, he could not have discerned the object at

all, or seen the vital type of it, unless he had, what we may call, *sympathized* with it,—had sympathy in him to bestow on objects. He must have been *sincere* about it too; sincere and sympathetic: a man without worth cannot give you the likeness of any object; he dwells in vague outwardness, fallacy and trivial hearsay, about all objects. And indeed may we not say that intellect altogether expresses itself in this power of discerning what an object is? Whatsoever of faculty a man's mind may have will come out here. Is it even of business, a matter to be done? The gifted man is he who *sees* the essential point, and leaves all the rest aside as surplusage; it is his faculty, too, the man of business's faculty, that he discern the true *likeness,* not the false, superficial one, of the thing he has got to work in. And how much of *morality* is in the kind of insight we get of anything; "the eye seeing in all things what it brought with it the faculty of seeing!" To the mean eye all things are trivial, as certainly as to the jaundiced they are yellow. Raphael, the Painters tell us, is the best of all Portrait-painters withal. No most gifted eye can exhaust the significance of any object. In the commonest human face there lies more than Raphael will take away with him.

Dante's painting is not graphic only, brief, true, and of a vividness as of fire in dark night; taken on the wider scale, it is every way noble,

and the outcome of a great soul. Francesca and her Lover, what qualities in that! A thing woven as out of rainbows, on a ground of eternal black. A small flute-voice of infinite wail speaks there, into our very heart of hearts. A touch of womanhood in it too: *della bella persona, che mi fu tolta;* and how, even in the Pit of woe, it is a solace that *he* will never part from her! Saddest tragedy in these *alti guai.* And the racking winds, in that *aer bruno,* whirl them away again, to wail forever!—Strange to think: Dante was the friend of this poor Francesca's father; Francesca herself may have sat upon the Poet's knee, as a bright innocent little child. Infinite pity, yet also infinite rigor of law: it is so Nature is made; it is so Dante discerned that she was made. What a paltry notion is that of his *Divine Comedy's* being a poor splenetic, impotent, terrestrial libel; putting those into Hell whom he could not be avenged upon on earth! I suppose if ever pity, tender as a mother's, was in the heart of any man, it was in Dante's. But a man who does not know rigor cannot pity either. His very pity will be cowardly, egoistic,—sentimentality, or little better. I know not in the world an affection equal to that of Dante. It is a tenderness, a trembling, longing, pitying love: like the wail of Æolian harps, soft, soft; like a child's young heart;—and then that stern, sore-saddened heart! These longings of his towards his

Beatrice; their meeting together in the *Paradiso;* his gazing in her pure transfigured eyes, her that had been purified by death so long, separated from him so far:—one likens it to the song of angels; it is among the purest utterances of affection, perhaps the very purest that ever came out of a human soul.

For the *intense* Dante is intense in all things; he has got into the essence of all. His intellectual insight, as painter, on occasion too as reasoner, is but the result of all other sorts of intensity. Morally great, above all, we must call him; it is the beginning of all. His scorn, his grief, are as transcendent as his love;—as, indeed, what are they but the *inverse* or *converse* of his love? *"A Dio Spiacenti, ed a' nemici sui,* Hateful to God and to the enemies of God": lofty scorn, unappeasable silent reprobation and aversion: *"Non ragionam di lor,* We will not speak of *them,* look only and pass." Or think of this: "They have not the *hope* to die, *Non han speranza di morte."* One day, it had risen sternly benign on the scathed heart of Dante, that he, wretched, never-resting, worn as he was, would full surely *die;* "that Destiny itself could not doom him not to die." Such words are in this man. For rigor, earnestness, and depth he is not to be paralleled in the modern world; to seek his parallel we must go into the Hebrew Bible, and live with the antique Prophets there.

I do not agree with much modern criticism, in greatly preferring the *Inferno* to the two other parts of the Divine *Commedia.* Such preference belongs, I imagine, to our general Byronism of taste, and is like to be a transient feeling. The *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso,* especially the former, one would almost say, is even more excellent than it. It is a noble thing that *Purgatorio,* "Mountain of Purification"; an emblem of the noblest conception of that age. If Sin is so fatal, and Hell is and must be so rigorous, awful, yet in Repentance too is man purified; Repentance is the grand Christian act. It is beautiful how Dante works it out. The *tremolar dell' onde,* that "trembling" of the ocean-waves under the first pure gleam of morning, dawning afar on the wandering Two, is as the type of an altered mood. Hope has now dawned; never-dying Hope, if in company still with heavy sorrow. The obscure sojourn of dæmons and reprobate is under foot; a soft breathing of penitence mounts higher and higher, to the Throne of Mercy itself. "Pray for me," the denizens of that Mount of Pain all say to him. "Tell my Giovanna to pray for me," my daughter Giovanni; "I think her mother loves me no more!" They toil painfully up by that winding steep, "bent down like corbels of a building," some of them,—crushed together so "for the sin of pride"; yet nevertheless in years,

in ages, and æons they shall have reached the top, which is Heaven's gate, and by Mercy shall have been admitted in. The joy too of all, when one has prevailed; the whole Mountain shakes with joy, and a psalm of praise rises, when one soul has perfected repentance, and got its sin and misery left behind! I call all this a noble embodiment of a true, noble thought.

But indeed the Three compartments mutually support one another, are indispensable to one another. The *Paradiso,* a kind of inarticulate music to me, is the redeeming side of the *Inferno;* the *Inferno* without it were untrue. All three make up the true Unseen World, as figured in the Christianity of the Middle Ages; a thing forever memorable, forever true in the essence of it, to all men. It was perhaps delineated in no human soul with such depth of veracity as in this of Dante's; a man *sent* to sing it, to keep it long memorable. Very notable with what brief simplicity he passes out of the every-day reality, into the Invisible one; and in the second or third stanza, we find ourselves in the World of Spirits; and dwell there, as among things palpable, indubitable! To Dante they *were* so; the real world, as it is called, and its facts, was but the threshold to an infinitely higher Fact of a World. At bottom, the one was as *preter*natural as the other. Has not each man a soul? He will not only be a spirit, but is one. To the earnest Dante

it is all one visible Fact; he believes it, sees it; is the Poet of it in virtue of that. Sincerity, I say again, is the saving merit, now as always.

Dante's Hell, Purgatory, Paradise, are a symbol withal, an emblematic representation of his Belief about this Universe:—some Critic in a future age, like those Scandinavian ones the other day, who has ceased altogether to think as Dante did, may find this too all an "Allegory," perhaps an idle Allegory! It is a sublime embodiment, our sublimest, of the soul of Christianity. It expresses, as in huge world-wide architectural emblems, how the Christian Dante felt Good and Evil to be the two polar elements of this Creation, on which it all turns; that these two differ not by *preferability* of one to the other, but by incompatibility absolute and infinite; that the one is excellent and high as light and Heaven, the other hideous, black as Gehenna and the Pit of Hell! Everlasting Justice, yet with Penitence, with everlasting Pity,—all Christianism, as Dante and the Middle Ages had it, is emblemed here. Emblemed: and yet, as I urged the other day, with what entire truth of purpose; how unconscious of any embleming! Hell, Purgatory, Paradise: these things were not fashioned as emblems; was there, in our Modern European Mind, any thought at all of their being emblems! Were they not indubitable, awful facts; the whole heart of man taking them for prac-

tically true, all Nature everywhere confirming them? So is it always in these things. Men do not believe in Allegory. The future Critic, whatever his new thought may be, who considers this of Dante to have been all got up as an Allegory, will commit one sore mistake!—Paganism we recognized as a veracious expression of the earnest, awe-struck feeling of man towards the Universe; veracious, true once, and still not without worth for us. But mark here the difference of Paganism and Christianism; and one great difference. Paganism emblemed chiefly the Operations of Nature; the destinies, efforts, combinations, vicissitudes of things and men in this world: Christianism emblemed the Law of Human Duty, the Moral Law of Man. One was for the sensuous nature: a rude helpless utterance of the *first* Thought of men,—the chief recognized virtue, Courage, Superiority to Fear. The other was not for the sensuous nature, but for the moral. What a progress is here, if in that one respect only!—

And so in this Dante, as we said, had ten silent centuries, in a very strange way, found a voice. The *Divina Commedia* is of Dante's writing; yet in truth *it* belongs to ten Christian centuries, only the finishing of it is Dante's. So always. The craftsman there, the smith with that metal of his, with these tools, with these cunning methods,—how little of all he does is properly *his* work!

All past inventive men work there with him;—as indeed with all of us, in all things. Dante is the spokesman of the Middle Ages; the Thought they lived by stands here, in everlasting music. These sublime ideas of his, terrible and beautiful, are the fruit of the Christian Meditation of all the good men who had gone before him. Precious they; but also is not he precious? Much, had not he spoken, would have been dumb; not dead, yet living voiceless.

On the whole, is it not an utterance, this mystic Song, at once of one of the greatest human souls, and of the highest thing that Europe had hitherto realized for itself? Christianism, as Dante sings it, is another than Paganism in the rude Norse mind; another than "Bastard Christianism" half-articulately spoken in the Arab Desert, seven hundred years before!—The noblest *idea* made *real* hitherto among men, is sung, and emblemed forth abidingly, by one of the noblest men. In the one sense and in the other, are we not right glad to possess it? As I calculate, it may last yet for long thousands of years. For the thing that is uttered from the inmost parts of a man's soul differs altogether from what is uttered by the outer part. The outer is of the day, under the empire of mode; the outer passes away, in swift endless changes; the inmost is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. True souls, in all generations of the world, who look

on this Dante, will find a brotherhood in him; the deep sincerity of his thoughts, his woes and hopes, will speak likewise to their sincerity; they will feel that this Dante too was a brother. Napoleon in Saint Helena is charmed with the genial veracity of old Homer. The oldest Hebrew Prophet, under a vesture the most diverse from ours, does yet, because he speaks from the heart of man, speak to all men's hearts. It is the one sole secret of continuing long memorable. Dante, for depth of sincerity, is like an antique Prophet too; his words, like theirs, come from his very heart. One need not wonder if it were predicted that his Poem might be the most enduring thing our Europe has yet made; for nothing so endures as a truly spoken word. All cathedrals, pontificalities, brass and stone, and outer arrangement never so lasting, are brief in comparison to an unfathomable heart-song like this: one feels as if it might survive, still of importance to men, when these had all sunk into new irrecognizable combinations, and had ceased individually to be.

DANTE

From the Essays of T. B. Macaulay.

The beginning of the thirteenth century was, as Machiavelli has remarked, the era of a great

revival of this extraordinary system. The policy of Innocent,—the growth of the Inquisition and the mendicant orders,—the wars against the Albigenses, the Pagans of the East, and the unfortunate princes of the house of Swabia, agitated Italy during the two following generations. In this point Dante was completely under the influence of his age. He was a man of a turbid and melancholy spirit. In early youth he had entertained a strong and unfortunate passion, which, long after the death of her whom he loved, continued to haunt him. Dissipation, ambition, misfortunes, had not effaced it. He was not only a sincere, but a passionate, believer. The crimes and abuses of the Church of Rome were indeed loathsome to him; but to all its doctrines and all its rites he adhered with enthusiastic fondness and veneration; and at length, driven from his native country, reduced to a situation the most painful to a man of his disposition, condemned to learn by experience that no food is so bitter as the bread of dependence, and no ascent so painful as the staircase of a patron, his wounded spirit took refuge in visionary devotion. Beatrice, the unforgotten object of his early tenderness, was invested by his imagination with glorious and mysterious attributes; she was enthroned among the highest of the celestial hierarchy: Almighty Wisdom had assigned to her the care of the sinful and unhappy wanderer who had loved

her with such a perfect love. By a confusion, like that which often takes place in dreams, he has sometimes lost sight of her human nature, and even of her personal existence, and seems to consider her as one of the attributes of the Deity.

But those religious hopes which had released the mind of the sublime enthusiast from the terrors of death had not rendered his speculations on human life more cheerful. This is an inconsistency which may often be observed in men of a similar temperament. He hoped for happiness beyond the grave: but he felt none on earth. It is from this cause, more than from any other, that his description of Heaven is so far inferior to the Hell or the Purgatory. With the passions and miseries of the suffering spirits he feels a strong sympathy. But among the beatified he appears as one who has nothing in common with them,—as one who is incapable of comprehending, not only the degree, but the nature of their enjoyment. We think that we see him standing amidst those smiling and radiant spirits with that scowl of unutterable misery on his brow, and that curl of bitter disdain on his lips, which all his portraits have preserved, and which might furnish Chantrey with hints for the head of his projected Satan.

There is no poet whose intellectual and moral character are so closely connected. The great source, as it appears to me, of the power of the

Divine Comedy is the strong belief with which the story seems to be told. In this respect, the only books which approach to its excellence are Gulliver's Travels and Robinson Crusoe. The solemnity of his asseverations, the consistency and minuteness of his details, the earnestness with which he labors to make the reader understand the exact shape and size of everything that he describes, give an air of reality to his wildest fictions. I should only weaken this statement by quoting instances of a feeling which pervades the whole work, and to which it owes much of its fascination. This is the real justification of the many passages in his poem which bad critics have condemned as grotesque. I am concerned to see that Mr. Cary, to whom Dante owes more than ever poet owed to translater, has sanctioned an accusation utterly unworthy of his abilities. "His solicitude," says that gentleman, "to define all his images in such a manner as to bring them within the circle of our vision, and to subject them to the power of the pencil, renders him little better than grotesque, where Milton has since taught us to expect sublimity." It is true that Dante has never shrunk from embodying his conceptions in determinate words, that he has even given measures and numbers, where Milton would have left his images to float undefined in a gorgeous haze of language. Both were right. Milton did not profess to have been in heaven or

hell. He might therefore reasonably confine himself to magnificent generalities. Far different was the office of the lonely traveller, who had wandered through the nations of the dead. Had he described the abode of the rejected spirits in language resembling the splendid lines of the English poet,—had he told us of

> "An universe of death, which God by curse
> Created evil, for evil only good,
> Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds
> Perverse all monstrous, all prodigious things,
> Abominable, unutterable, and worse
> Than fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived,
> Gorgons, and hydras, and chimæras dire,"—

this would doubtless have been noble writing. But where would have been that strong impression of reality, which, in accordance with his plan, it should have been his great object to produce? It was absolutely necessary for him to delineate accurately "all monstrous, all prodigious things,"—to utter what might to others appear "unutterable,"—to relate with the air of truth what fables had never feigned,—to embody what fear had never conceived. And I will frankly confess that the vague sublimity of Milton affects me less than these reviled details of Dante. We read Milton; and we know that we are reading a great poet. When we read Dante, the poet vanishes. We are listening to the man who has returned from "the valley of the dolor-

ous abyss;—we seem to see the dilated eye of horror, to hear the shuddering accents with which he tells his fearful tale. Considered in this light, the narratives are exactly what they should be,—definite in themselves, but suggesting to the mind ideas of awful and indefinite wonder. They are made up of the images of the earth: they are told in the language of the earth. Yet the whole effect is, beyond expression, wild and unearthly. The fact is, that supernatural beings, as long as they are considered merely with reference to their own nature, excite our feelings very feebly. It is when the great gulf which separates them from us is passed, when we suspect some strange and undefinable relation between the laws of the visible and the invisible world, that they rouse, perhaps, the strongest emotions of which our nature is capable. How many children, and how many men, are afraid of ghosts, who are not afraid of God! And this, because, though they entertain a much stronger conviction of the existence of a Deity than of the reality of apparitions, they have no apprehension that he will manifest himself to them in any sensible manner. While this is the case, to describe superhuman beings in the language, and to attribute to them the actions of humanity, may be grotesque, unphilosophical, inconsistent; but it will be the only mode of working upon the feelings of men, and therefore the only mode suited for poetry. Shakespeare un-

derstood this well, as he understood everything that belonged to his art. Who does not sympathize with the rapture of Ariel, flying after sunset on the wings of the bat, or sucking the cups of flowers with the bee? Who does not shudder at the caldron of Macbeth? Where is the philosopher who is not moved when he thinks of the strange connection between the infernal spirits and "the sow's blood that hath eaten her nine farrow"? But this difficult task of representing supernatural beings to our minds in a manner which shall be neither unintelligible to our intellects, nor wholly inconsistent with our ideas of their nature, has never been so well performed as by Dante. I will refer to three instances, which are, perhaps, the most striking;—the description of the transformation of the serpents and the robbers, in the twenty-fifth canto of the Inferno, —the passage concerning Nimrod, in the thirty-first canto of the same part,—and the magnificent procession in the twenty-ninth canto of the Purgatorio.

The metaphors and comparisons of Dante harmonize admirably with that air of strong reality of which I have spoken. They have a very peculiar character. He is perhaps the only poet whose writings become much less intelligible if all illustrations of this sort were expunged. His similes are frequently rather those of a traveller than of a poet. He employs them not to display

his ingenuity by fanciful analogies,—not to delight the reader by affording him a distant and passing glimpse of beautiful images remote from the path in which he is proceeding,—but to give an exact idea of the objects which he is describing, by comparing them with others generally known. The boiling pitch in Malebolge was like that in the Venetian arsenal;—the mound on which he travelled along the banks of Phlegethon was like that between Ghent and Bruges, but not so large;—the cavities where the Simoniacal prelates are confined resembled the fonts in the Church of John at Florence. Every reader of Dante will recall many other illustrations of this description, which add to the appearance of sincerity and earnestness from which the narrative derives so much of its interest.

Many of his comparisons, again, are intended to give an exact idea of his feelings under particular circumstances. The delicate shades of grief, of fear, of anger, are rarely discriminated with sufficient accuracy in the language of the most refined nations. A rude dialect never abounds in nice distinctions of this kind. Dante therefore employs the most accurate and infinitely the most poetical mode of marking the precise state of his mind. Every person who has experienced the bewildering effect of sudden bad tidings,—the stupefaction,—the vague doubt of the truth of our own perceptions which they pro-

duce,—will understand the following simile:—"I was as he is who dreameth his own harm,—who, dreaming, wishes that it may be all a dream, so that he desires that which is as though it were not." This is only one out of a hundred equally striking and expressive similitudes. The comparisons of Homer and Milton are magnificent digressions. It scarcely injures their effect to detach them from the work. Those of Dante are very different. They derive their beauty from the context, and reflect beauty upon it. His embroidery cannot be taken out without spoiling the whole web. I cannot dismiss this part of the subject without advising every person who can muster sufficient Italian to read the simile of the sheep, in the third canto of the Purgatorio. I think it the most perfect passage of the kind in the world, the most imaginative, the most picturesque, and the most sweetly expressed.

No person can have attended to the Divine Comedy without observing how little impression the forms of the external world appear to have made on the mind of Dante. His temper and his situation had led him to fix his observation almost exclusively on human nature. The exquisite opening of the eighth canto of the Purgatorio affords a strong instance of this. He leaves to others the earth, the ocean, and the sky. His business is with man. To other writers,

evening may be the season of dews and stars and radiant clouds. To Dante it is the hour of fond recollection and passionate devotion,—the hour which melts the heart of the mariner and kindles the love of the pilgrim,—the hour when the toll of the bell seems to mourn for another day, which is gone and will return no more.

The feeling of the present age has taken a direction diametrically opposite. The magnificence of the physical world, and its influence upon the human mind, have been the favorite themes of our most eminent poets. The herd of blue-stocking ladies and sonneteering gentlemen seems to consider a strong sensibility to the "splendor of the grass, the glory of the flower," as an ingredient absolutely indispensable in the formation of a poetical mind. They treat with contempt all writers who are unfortunately

> "nec ponere lucum
> Artifices, nec rus saturum laudare."

The orthodox poetical creed is more Catholic. The noblest earthly object of the contemplation of man is man himself. The universe, and all its fair and glorious forms, are indeed included in the wide empire of the imagination; but she has placed her home and her sanctuary amidst the inexhaustible varieties and the impenetrable mysteries of the mind

"In tutte parti impera, e quivi regge;
Quivi è la sua cittade, e l' alto seggio."

Othello is perhaps the greatest work in the world. From what does it derive its power? From the clouds? From the ocean? From the mountains? Or from love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave! What is it that we go forth to see in Hamlet? Is it a reed shaken with the wind? A small celandine? A bed of daffodils? Or is it to contemplate a mighty and wayward mind laid bare before us to the inmost recesses? It may perhaps be doubted whether the lakes and the hills are better fitted for the education of a poet than the dusky streets of a huge capital. Indeed, who is not tired to death with pure description of scenery? Is it not the fact, that external objects never strongly excite our feelings but when they are contemplated in reference to man, as illustrating his destiny, or as influencing his character? The most beautiful object in the world, it will be allowed, is a beautiful woman. But who that can analyze his feelings is not sensible that she owes her fascination less to grace of outline and delicacy of color, than to a thousand associations which, often unperceived by ourselves, connect those qualities with the source of our existence, with the nourishment of our infancy, with the passions of our youth, with the hopes of our age, with elegance, with vivacity, with tenderness, with the strongest

of natural instincts, with the dearest of social ties?

To those who think thus, the insensibility of the Florentine poet to the beauties of nature will not appear an unpardonable deficiency. On mankind no writer, with the exception of Shakespeare, has looked with a more penetrating eye. I have said that his poetical character had derived a tinge from his peculiar temper. It is on the sterner and darker passions that he delights to dwell. All love, excepting the half mystic passion which he still felt for his buried Beatrice, had palled on the fierce and restless exile. The sad story of Rimini is almost a single exception. I know not whether it has been remarked, that, in one point, misanthropy seems to have affected his mind as it did that of Swift. Nauseous and revolting images seem to have had a fascination for his mind; and he repeatedly places before his readers, with all the energy of his incomparable style, the most loathsome objects of the sewer and the dissecting-room.

There is another peculiarity in the poem of Dante, which, I think, deserves notice. Ancient mythology has hardly ever been successfully interwoven with modern poetry. One class of writers have introduced the fabulous deities merely as allegorical representatives of love, wine, or wisdom. This necessarily renders their works tame and cold. We may sometimes ad-

mire their ingenuity; but with what interest can we read of beings of whose personal existence the writer does not suffer us to entertain, for a moment, even a conventional belief? Even Spenser's allegory is scarcely tolerable, till we contrive to forget that Una signifies innocence, and consider her merely as an oppressed lady under the protection of a generous knight.

Those writers who have, more judiciously, attempted to preserve the personality of the classical divinities have failed from a different cause. They have been imitators, and imitators at a disadvantage. Euripides and Catullus believed in Bacchus and Cybele as little as we do. But they lived among men who did. Their imaginations, if not their opinions, took the color of the age. Hence the glorious inspiration of the Bacchæ and the Atys. Our minds are formed by circumstances: and I do not believe that it would be in the power of the greatest modern poet to lash himself up to a degree of enthusiasm adequate to the production of such works.

Dante alone, among the poets of later times, has been, in this respect, neither an allegorist nor an imitator; and, consequently, he alone has introduced the ancient fictions with effect. His Minos, his Charon, his Pluto, are absolutely terrific. Nothing can be more beautiful or original than the use which he has made of the river of Lethe. He has never assigned to his mytholog-

ical characters any functions inconsistent with the creed of the Catholic Church. He has related nothing concerning them which a good Christian of that age might not believe possible. On this account, there is nothing in these passages that appears puerile or pedantic. On the contrary, this singular use of classical names suggests to the mind a vague and awful idea of some mysterious revelation, anterior to all recorded history, of which the dispersed fragments might have been retained amidst the impostures and superstitions of later religions. Indeed the mythology of the Divine Comedy is of the elder and more colossal mould. It breathes the spirit of Homer and Æschylus, not of Ovid and Claudian.

This is the more extraordinary, since Dante seems to have been utterly ignorant of the Greek language; and his favorite Latin models could only have served to mislead him. Indeed, it is impossible not to remark his admiration of writers far inferior to himself; and, in particular, his idolatry of Virgil, who, elegant and splendid as he is, has no pretensions to the depth and originality of mind which characterize his Tuscan worshipper. In truth, it may be laid down as an almost universal rule that good poets are bad critics. Their minds are under the tyranny of ten thousand associations imperceptible to others. The worst writer may easily happen to touch a

spring which is connected in their minds with a long succession of beautiful images. They are like the gigantic slaves of Aladdin, gifted with matchless power, but bound by spells so mighty that, when a child whom they could have crushed touched a talisman, of whose secret he was ignorant, they immediately became his vassals. It has more than once happened to me to see minds, graceful and majestic as the Titania of Shakespeare, bewitched by the charms of an ass's head, bestowing on it the fondest caresses, and crowning it with the sweetest flowers. I need only mention the poems attributed to Ossian. They are utterly worthless, except as an edifying instance of the success of a story without evidence, and of a book without merit. They are a chaos of words which present no image, of images which have no archetype;—they are without form and void; and darkness is upon the face of them. Yet how many men of genius have panegyrized and imitated them!

The style of Dante is, if not his highest, perhaps his most peculiar excellence. I know nothing with which it can be compared. The noblest models of Greek composition must yield to it. His words are the fewest and the best which it is possible to use. The first expression in which he clothes his thoughts is always so energetic and comprehensive, that amplification would only injure the effect. There is probably no writer in

any language who has presented so many strong pictures to the mind. Yet there is probably no writer equally concise. This perfection of style is the principal merit of the Paradiso, which, as I have already remarked, is by no means equal in other respects to the two preceding parts of the poem. The force and felicity of the diction, however, irresistibly attract the reader through the theological lectures and the sketches of ecclesiastical biography, with which this division of the work too much abounds. It may seem almost absurd to quote particular specimens of an excellence which is diffused over all his hundred cantos. I will, however, instance the third canto of the Inferno, and the sixth of the Purgatorio, as passages incomparable in their kind. The merit of the latter is, perhaps, rather oratorical than poetical; nor can I recollect anything in the great Athenian speeches which equals it in force of invective and bitterness of sarcasm. I have heard the most eloquent statesman of the age remark, that next to Demosthenes, Dante is the writer who ought to be most attentively studied by every man who desires to attain oratorical eminence.

DANTE AND MILTON

From the Essays of T. B. Macaulay.

The only poem of the modern times which can be compared with the Paradise Lost is the Divine Comedy. The subject of Milton, in some points, resembled that of Dante; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet, than by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante, as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the color, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His smiles are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty,

in the objects from which they are drawn; not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The cataract of Phlegethon was like that of Aqua Cheta at the monastery of St. Benedict. The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles.

Now let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim intimations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas: his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod. "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St. Peter's at Rome; and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank which concealed him from the waist downwards

nevertheless showed so much of him, that three tall Germans would in vain have attempted to reach to his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr. Cary's translations is not at hand; and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar-house in the eleventh book of the Paradise Lost with the last word of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery, Despair hurrying from couch to couch to mock the wretches with his attendance, Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there as there would be if all the sick who, between July and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has wisely, or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. The Divine Comedy is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that

which he relates. He is the very man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death, who has read the dusky characters on the portal within which there is no hope, who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon, who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Draghignazzo. His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer. His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation. His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel. The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust, unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante, as the adventures of Amadis differ from those of Gulliver. . . .

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque indeed beyond any that ever was written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of Dante's poem, which, as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. The supernatural agents excite an interest; but it is not

the interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk to the ghosts and demons without any emotion of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company. Dante's angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful, ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Farinata is justly celebrated. Still, Farinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Farinata would have been at an *auto da fe*. Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice. Yet what is it but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

THE ITALIAN PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Leigh Hunt's Stories from the Italian Poets.

Dante entitled the saddest poem in the world a Comedy, because it was written in a middle style; though some, by a strange confusion of ideas, think the reason must have been because it "ended

happily!" that is, because beginning with hell (to some), it terminated with "heaven" (to others). As well might they have said, that a morning's work in the Inquisition ended happily, because, while people were being racked in the dungeons, the officers were making merry in the drawing-room. For the much-injured epithet of "Divine," Dante's memory is not responsible. He entitled his poem, arrogantly enough, yet still not with that impiety of arrogance, "The Comedy of Dante Alighieri, a Florentine by nation, but not by habits." The word "divine" was added by some transcriber; and it heaped absurdity on absurdity, too much of it, alas! being literally infernal tragedy. I am not speaking in mockery, any further than the fact itself cannot help so speaking. I respect what is to be respected in Dante; I admire in him what is admirable; would love (if his infernalities would let me) what is lovable; but this must not hinder one of the human race from protesting against what is erroneous in his fame, when it jars against every best feeling, human and divine. Mr. Cary thinks that Dante had as much right to avail himself of "the popular creed in all its extravagance," as Homer had of his gods, or Shakespeare of his fairies. But the distinction is obvious. Homer did not personally identify himself with a creed, or do his utmost to perpet-

uate the worst parts of it in behalf of a ferocious inquisitorial church, and to the risk of endangering the peace of millions of gentle minds.

The great poem thus misnomered is partly a system of theology, partly an abstract of the knowledge of the day, but chiefly a series of passionate and imaginative pictures, altogether forming an account of the author's times, his friends, his enemies, and himself, written to vent the spleen of his exile, and the rest of his feelings, good and bad, and to reform church and state by a spirit of resentment and obloquy, which highly needed reform itself. It has also a design strictly self-referential. The author feigns that the beatified spirit of his mistress has obtained leave to warn and purify his soul by showing him the state of things in the next world. She deputes the soul of his master Virgil to conduct him through hell and purgatory, and then takes him herself through the spheres of heaven, where St. Peter catechises and confirms him, and where he is finally honored with sights of the Virgin Mary, of Christ, and even a glimpse of the Supreme Being!

His hell, considered as a place, is, to speak geologically, a most fantastical formation. It descends from beneath Jerusalem to the center of the earth and is a funnel graduated in circles, each circle being a separate place of torment for a different vice or its co-ordinates, and the point

of the funnel terminating with Satan stuck into ice. Purgatory is a corresponding mountain on the other side of the globe, commencing with the antipodes of Jerusalem, and divided into exterior circles of expiation, which end in a table-land forming the terrestial paradise. From this the hero and his mistress ascend by a flight, exquisitely conceived, to the stars; where the sun and the planets of the Ptolemaic system (for the true one was unknown in Dante's time) form a series of heavens for different virtues, the whole terminating in the empyrean, or region of pure light, and the presence of the Beatific Vision.

The boundaries of old and new, strange as it may now seem to us, were so confused in those days, and books were so rare, and the Latin poets held in such invincible reverence, that Dante, in one and the same poem, speaks of the false gods of Paganism, and yet retains much of its lower mythology; nay, invokes Apollo himself at the door of paradise. There was, perhaps, some mystical and even philosophical inclusion of the past in this medley, as recognizing the constant superintendence of Providence; but that Dante partook of what may be called the literary superstition of the time, even for want of better knowledge, is clear from the grave historical use he makes of poetic fables in his treatise on Monarchy, and in the very arguments which he

puts into the mouths of saints and apostles. There are lingering feelings to this effect even now among the peasantry of Italy; where, the reader need not be told, Pagan customs of all sorts, including religious and most reverend ones, are existing under the sanction of other names,—heathenisms christened. A Tuscan postillion, once enumerating to me some of the native poets, concluded his list with Apollo; and a plaster-cast man over here, in London, appeared much puzzled, when conversing on the subject with a friend of mine, how to discrepate Samson from Hercules.

Dante, accordingly, while, with the frightful bigotry of the schools, he puts the whole Pagan world into hell-borders, (with the exception of two or three, whose salvation adds to the absurdity,) mingles the hell of Virgil with that of Tertullian and St. Dominic; sets Minos at the door as judge; retains Charon in his old office of boatman over the Stygian lake; puts fabulous people with real among the damned, Dido, and Cacus, and Ephialtes, with Ezzelino and Pope Nicholas the Fifth; and associates the Centaurs and the Furies with the agents of diabolical torture. It has pleased him also to elevate Cato of Utica to the office of warder of purgatory, though the censor's poor, good wife, Marcia, is detained in the regions below. By these and other far greater inconsistencies, the whole place of

punishment becomes a *reductio ad absurdum,* as ridiculous as it is melancholy; so that one is astonished how so great a man, and especially a man who thought himself so far advanced beyond his age, and who possessed such powers of discerning the good and beautiful, could endure to let his mind live in so foul and foolish a region for any length of time, and there wreak and harden the unworthiest of his passions. Genius, nevertheless, is so commensurate with absurdity throughout the book, and there are even such sweet and balmy as well as sublime pictures in it occasionally, nay often, that not only will the poem ever be worthy of admiration, but, when those increasing purifications of Christianity which our blessed reformers began shall finally precipitate the whole dregs of the author into the mythology to which they belong, the world will derive a pleasure from it to an amount not to be conceived till the arrival of that day. Dante, meantime, with an impartiality which has been admired by those who can approve the assumption of a theological tyranny at the expense of common feeling and decency, has put friends as well as foes into hell,—tutors of his childhood, kinsmen of those who treated him hospitably, even the father of his beloved friend, Guido Cavalcante. . . .

Milton has spoken of the "milder shades of Purgatory"; and truly they possess great beau-

ties. Even in a theological point of view they are something like a bit of Christian refreshment after the horrors of the *Inferno*. The first emerging from the hideous gulf to the sight of the blue serenity of heaven is painted in a manner inexpressibly charming. So is the seashore with the coming of the angel; the valley, with the angels in green; the repose at night on the rocks; and twenty other pictures of gentleness and love. And yet special and great has been the escape of the Protestant world from this part of Roman Catholic belief; for Purgatory is the heaviest stone that hangs about the neck of the old and feeble in that communion. Hell is avoidable by repentance; but Purgatory what modest conscience shall escape? Mr. Cary, in a note on a passage in which Dante recommends his readers to think on what follows this expiatory state, rather than what is suffered there, looks upon the poet's injunction as an "unanswerable objection to the doctrine of purgatory," it being difficult to conceive "how the best can meet death without horror, if they believe it must be followed by immediate and intense suffering." Luckily, assent is not belief; and mankind's feelings are for the most part superior to their opinions; otherwise the world would have been in a bad way indeed, and Nature not been vindicated of her children. But

let us watch and be on our guard against all resuscitations of superstition.

As to our Florentine's Heaven, it is full of beauties also, though sometimes of a more questionable and pantomimical sort than is to be found in either of the other books. I shall speak of some of them presently; but the general impressions of the place is, that it is no heaven at all. He says it is, and talks much of its smiles and its beatitude; but always excepting the poetry,—especially the similes brought from the more heavenly earth,—we realize little but a fantastical assemblage of doctors and doubtful characters, far more angry and theological than celestial; giddy raptures of monks and inquisitors dancing in circles, and saints denouncing popes and Florentines; in short, a heaven libelling itself with invectives against earth, and terminating in a great presumption. . . .

The people of Sienna, according to this national and Christian poet, were a parcel of coxcombs; those of Arezzo, dogs; and of Cassentino, hogs. Lucca made a trade of perjury. Pistoia was a den of beasts, and ought to be reduced to ashes; and the river Arno should overflow and drown every soul in Pisa. Almost all the women in Florence walked half naked in public, and were abandoned in private. Every

brother, husband, son, and father, in Bologna, set their women to sale. In all Lombardy were not to be found three men who were not rascals; and in Genoa and Romagna people went about pretending to be men, but in reality were bodies inhabited by devils, their souls having gone to the "lowest pit of hell" to join the betrayers of their friends and kinsmen.

So much for his beloved countrymen. As for foreigners, particularly kings, Edward the First of England and Robert of Scotland were a couple of grasping fools; the Emperor Albert was an usurper; Alphonso the Second of Spain, a debauchee; the King of Bohemia, a coward; Frederick of Aragon, a coward and miser; the Kings of Portugal and Norway, forgers; the King of Naples, a man whose virtues were expressed by a unity, and his vices by a million; and the King of France, the descendant of a Paris butcher, and of progenitors who poisoned St. Thomas Aquinas, their descendants conquering with the arms of Judas rather than of soldiers, and selling the flesh of their daughters to old men, in order to extricate themselves from a danger. . . .

But truly it is said, that, when Dante is great, nobody surpasses him. I doubt if anybody equals him, as to the constant intensity and incessant variety of his pictures; and whatever he paints, he throws, as it were, upon its own pow-

ers; as though an artist should draw figures that started into life, and proceeded to action for themselves, frightening their creator. Every motion, word, and look of these creatures becomes full of sensibility and suggestions. The invisible is at the back of the visible; darkness becomes palpable; silence describes a character, nay, forms the most striking part of a story; a word acts as a flash of lightning, which displays some gloomy neighborhood, where a tower is standing, with dreadful faces at the window; or where, at your feet, full of eternal voices, one abyss is beheld dropping out of another in the lurid light of torment. . . .

Ginguéné has remarked the singular variety, as well as beauty, of Dante's angels. Milton's, indeed, are commonplace in the comparison. In the eighth canto of the *Inferno,* the devils insolently refuse the poet and his guide an entrance into the city of Dis. An angel comes sweeping over the Stygian lake to enforce it; the noise of his wings makes the shores tremble, and is like a crashing whirlwind, such as beats down the trees and sends the peasants and their herds flying before it. The heavenly messenger, after rebuking the devils, touches the portals of the city with his wand; they fly open; and he returns the way he came without uttering a word to the two companions. His face was that of one occupied with other thoughts. This angel is an-

nounced by a tempest. Another, who brings the souls of the departed to Purgatory, is first discovered at a distance, gradually disclosing white splendors, which are his wings and garments. He comes in a boat, of which his wings are the sails; and as he approaches, it is impossible to look him in the face for its brightness. Two other angels have green wings and green garments, and the drapery is kept in motion like a flag by the vehement action of the wings. A fifth has a face like the morning star, casting forth quivering beams. A sixth is of a lustre so oppressive, that the poet feels a weight on his eyes before he knows what is coming. Another's presence affects the senses like the fragrance of a May morning; and another is in garments dark as cinders, but has a sword in his hand too sparkling to be gazed at. Dante's occasional pictures of the beauties of external nature are worthy of these angelic creations, and to the last degree fresh and lovely. You long to bathe your eyes, smarting with the fumes of hell, in his dews. You gaze enchanted on his green fields and his celestial blue skies, the more so from the pain and sorrow in midst of which the visions are created.

Dante's grandeur of every kind is proportionate to that of his angels, almost to his ferocity; and that is saying everything. It is not always the spiritual grandeur of Milton, the subjection of the material impression to the moral; but it is

equally such when he chooses, and far more abundant. His infernal precipices—his black whirlwinds—his innumerable cries and claspings of hands—his very odors of huge loathsomeness, his giants at twilight standing up to the middle in pits, like towers, and causing earthquakes when they move—his earthquake of the mountain in Purgatory, when a spirit is set free for heaven—his dignified Mantuan Sordello, silently regarding him and his guide as they go by, "like a lion on his watch"—his blasphemer, Capaneus, lying in unconquered rage and sullenness under an eternal rain of flakes of fire (human precursor of Milton's Satan)—his aspect of Paradise, "as if the universe had smiled"—his inhabitants of the whole planet Saturn crying out *so loud,* in accordance with the anti-Papal indignation of Saint Pietro Damiano, that the poet, though among them, *could not hear what they said*—and the blushing eclipse, like red clouds at sunset, which takes place at the Apostle Peter's denunciation of the sanguinary filth of the court of Rome,—all these sublimities, and many more, make us not know whether to be more astonished at the greatness of the poet or the raging littleness of the man. Grievous is it to be forced to bring two such opposites together; and I wish, for the honor and glory of poetry, I did not feel compelled to do so. But the swarthy Florentine had not the healthy temperament of his

brethren, and he fell upon evil times. Compared with Homer and Shakespeare, his very intensity seems only superior to theirs from an excess of the morbid; and he is inferior to both in other sovereign qualities of poetry,—to the one, in giving you the healthiest general impression of nature itself,—to Shakespeare, in boundless universality,—to most great poets, in thorough harmony and delightfulness. He wanted (generally speaking) the music of a happy and a happy-making disposition. Homer, from his large vital bosom, breathes like a broad fresh air over the world, amidst alternate storm and sunshine, making you aware that there is rough work to be faced, but also activity and beauty to be enjoyed. The feeling of health and strength is predominant. Life laughs at death itself, or meets it with a noble confidence,—is not taught to dread it as a malignant goblin. Shakespeare has all the smiles as well as tears of Nature, and discerns the "soul of goodness in things evil." He is comedy as well as tragedy, —the entire man in all his qualities, moods, and experiences; and he beautifies all. And both those truly divine poets make Nature their subject through her own inspiriting medium,—not through the darkened glass of one man's spleen and resentment. Dante, in constituting himself the hero of his poem, not only renders her, in the general impression, as dreary as himself, in

spite of the occasional beautiful pictures he draws of her, but narrows her very immensity into his pettiness. He fancied, alas! that he could build her universe over again out of the politics of old Rome and the divinity of the schools! . . .

All that Dante said or did has its interest for us in spite of his errors, because he was an earnest and suffering man and a great genius; but his fame must ever continue to lie where his greatest blame does, in his principal work. He was a gratuitous logician, a preposterous politician, a cruel theologian; but his wonderful imagination, and (considering the bitterness that was in him) still more wonderful sweetness, have gone into the hearts of his fellow-creatures, and will remain there in spite of the moral and religious absurdities with which they are mingled, and of the inability which the best-natured readers feel to associate his entire memory, as a poet, with their usual personal delight in a poet and his name.

DANTE AND TACITUS

By Rev. H. H. Milman, History of Latin Christianity, Book XIV. ch. 5.

Christendom owes to Dante the creation of Italian Poetry, through Italian, of Christian

Poetry. It required all the courage, firmness, and prophetic sagacity of Dante to throw aside the inflexible bondage of the established hierarchical Latin of Europe. He had almost yielded, and had actually commenced the Divine Comedy in the ancient, it seemed, the universal and eternal language. But the poet had profoundly meditated, and deliberately resolved on his appeal to the Italian mind and heart. Yet even then he had to choose, to a certain extent to form, the pure, vigorous, picturesque, harmonious Italian which was to be intelligible, which was to become native and popular to the universal ear of Italy. He had to create; out of a chaos he had to summon light. Every kingdom, every province, every district, almost every city, had its dialect, peculiar, separate, distinct, rude in construction, harsh, in different degrees, in utterance. Dante in his book on Vulgar Eloquence ranges over the whole land, rapidly discusses the Sicilian and Apulian, the Roman and Spoletan, the Tuscan and Genoese, the Romagnole and the Lombard, the Trevisan and Venetian, the Istrian and Friulian; all are coarse, harsh, mutilated, defective. The least bad is the vulgar Bolognese. But high above all this discord he seems to discern, and to receive into his prophetic ears, a noble and pure language, common to all, peculiar to none, a language which he describes as Illustrious, Cardi-

nal, Courtly, if we may use our phrase, Parliamentary, that is, of the palace, the courts of justice, and of public affairs. No doubt, it sprung, though its affiliation is by no means clear, out of the universal degenerate Latin, the rustic tongue, common not in Italy alone, but in all the provinces of the Roman Empire. Its first domicile was the splendid Sicilian and Apulian Court of Frederick the Second, and of his accomplished son. It has been boldly said, that it was part of Frederick's magnificent design of universal empire: he would make Italy one realm, under one king, and speaking one language. Dante does homage to the noble character of Frederick the Second. Sicily was the birthplace of Italian Poetry. The Sicilian Poems live to bear witness to the truth of Dante's assertion, which might rest on his irrefragable authority alone. The poems, one even earlier than the Court of Frederick, those of Frederick himself, of Pietro della Vigna, of King Enzio, of King Manfred, with some peculiarities in the formation, orthography, use, and sounds of words, are intelligible from one end of the peninsula to the other. The language was echoed and perpetuated, or rather resounded spontaneously, among poets in other districts. This courtly, aristocratical, universal Italian, Dante heard as the conventional dialect in the Courts of the Cæsars, in the republics, in

the principalities throughout Italy. Perhaps Dante, the Italian, the Ghibelline, the assertor of the universal temporal monarchy, dwelt not less fondly in his imagination on this universal and noble Italian language, because it would supersede the Papal and hierarchical Latin; the Latin, with the Pope himself, would withdraw into the sanctuary, into the service of the Church, into affairs purely spiritual.

However this might be, to this vehicle of his noble thoughts Dante fearlessly intrusted his poetic immortality, which no poet anticipated with more confident security. While the scholar Petrarch condescended to the vulgar tongue in his amatory poems, which he had still a lurking fear might be but ephemeral, in his Africa and in his Latin verses he laid up, as he fondly thought, an imperishable treasure of fame. Even Boccaccio, happily for his own glory, followed the example of Dante, as he too probably supposed in his least enduring work, his gay Decamerone. Yet Boccaccio doubted, towards the close of his life, whether the Divine Comedy had not been more sublime, and therefore destined to a more secure eternity, in Latin.

Thus in Italy, with the Italian language, of which, if he was not absolutely the creator, he was the first who gave it permanent and vital being, arose one of the great poets of the world. There is a vast chasm between the close of Ro-

man and the dawn of Italian letters, between the period at which appeared the last creative work written by transcendent human genius in the Roman language, while yet in its consummate strength and perfection, and the first in which Italian poetry and the Italian tongue came forth in their majesty; between the history of Tacitus and the Divina Commedia. No one can appreciate more highly than myself (if I may venture to speak of myself) the great works of ecclesiastical Latin, the Vulgate, parts of the Ritual, St. Augustine: yet who can deny that there is barbarism, a yet unreconciled confusion of uncongenial elements, of Orientalism and Occidentalism, in the language? From the time of Trajan, except Claudian, Latin letters are almost exclusively Christian; and Christian letters are Latin, as it were, in a secondary and degenerate form. The new era opens with Dante.

To my mind there is a singular kindred and similitude between the last great Latin and the first great Italian writer, though one is a poet, the other an historian. Tacitus and Dante have the same penetrative truth of observation as to man and the external world of man; the same power of expressing that truth. They have the common gift of flashing a whole train of thought, a vast range of images on the mind, by a few brief and pregnant words; the same fac-

ulty of giving life to human emotions by natural images, of imparting to natural images, as it were, human life and human sympathies: each has the intuitive judgment of saying just enough; the stern self-restraint which will not say more than enough; the rare talent of compressing a mass of profound thought into an apophthegm; each paints with words, with the fewest possible words, yet the picture lives and speaks. Each has that relentless moral indignation, that awful power of satire, which in the historian condemns to an immortality of earthly infamy, in the Christian poet aggravates that gloomy immortality of this world by ratifying it in the next. Each might seem to embody remorse. Patrician, high, imperial, princely, Papal criminals are compelled to acknowledge the justice of their doom. Each, too, writing, one of times just passed, of which the influences were strongly felt in the social state and fortunes of Rome,—the other of his own, in which he had been actively concerned,—throws a personal passion (Dante of course the most) into his judgments and his language, which, whatever may be its effect on their justice, adds wonderfully to their force and reality. Each, too, has a lofty sympathy with good, only that the highest ideal of Tactitus is a death-defying Stoic, or an all-accomplished Roman Proconsul, an Helvidius Thrasea, or an Agricola; that of Dante, a suf-

fering and so purified and beatified Christian saint, or martyr; in Tacitus it is a majestic and virtuous Roman matron, an Agrippina, in Dante an unreal mysterious Beatrice.

Dante is not merely the religious poet of Latin or mediæval Christianity; in him that mediæval Christianity is summed up as it were, and embodied for perpetuity. The Divine Comedy contains in its sublimest form the whole mythology, and at the same time the quintessence, the living substance, the ultimate conclusions of the Scholastic Theology. The whole course of Legend, the Demonology, Angelology, the extra mundane world, which in the popular belief was vague, fragmentary, incoherent, in Dante, as we have seen, becomes an actual, visible, harmonious system. In Dante heathen images, heathen mythology, are blended in the same living reality with those of Latin Christianity, but they are real in the sense of the early Christian Fathers. They are acknowledged as a part of the vast hostile Demon world, just as the Angelic Orders, which from Jewish or Oriental tradition obtained their first organization in the hierarchy of the Areopagite. So, too, the schools of Theology meet in the poet. Aquinas, it has been said, has nothing more subtile and metaphysical than the Paradise, only that in Dante single lines, or pregnant stanzas, have the full meaning of pages or chapters of

divinity. But though his doctrine is that of Aquinas, Dante has all the fervor and passion of the Mystics; he is Bonaventura as well as St. Thomas.

Dante was in all respects but one, his Ghibellinism, the religious poet of his age, and to many minds not less religious for that exception. He was anti-Papal, but with the fullest reverence for the spiritual supremacy of the successor of St. Peter. To him, as to most religious Imperialists or Ghibellines, to some of the spiritual Franciscans, to a vast host of believers throughout Christendom, the Pope was two distinct personages. One, the temporal, they scrupled not to condemn with the fiercest reprobation, to hate with the bitterest cordiality: Dante damns pontiffs without fear or remorse. But the other, the Spiritual Pope, was worthy of all awe or reverence; his sacred person must be inviolate; his words, if not infallible, must be heard with the profoundest respect; he is the Vicar of Christ, the representative of God upon earth. With his Ghibelline brethren Dante closed his eyes against the incongruity, the inevitable incongruity, of these two discordant personages meeting in one: the same Boniface is in hell, yet was of such acknowledged sancity on earth that it was spiritual treason to touch his awful person. The Saints of Dante are the Saints of the Church; on the highest height of wisdom is St.

Thomas, on the highest height of holiness, St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Francis. To the religious adversaries of the Church he has all the stern remorselessness of an inquisitor. The noble Frederick the Second, whom we have just heard described as the parent of Italian poetry, the model of a mighty Emperor, the Cæsar of Cæsars, is in hell as an archheretic, as an atheist. In hell in the same dreary circle, up to his waist in fire, is the noblest of the Ghibellines, Farinata degli Uberti. In hell for the same sin is the father of his dearest friend and brother poet Guido Cavalcanti. Whatever latent sympathy seems to transpire for Fra Dolcino, he is unrelentingly thrust down to the companionship of Mohammed. The Catholic may not reverse the sentence of the Church.

DANTE'S LANDSCAPES

From Ruskin's Modern Painters, Vol. III. ch. 14.

The thing that must first strike us in this respect, as we turn our thoughts to the poem, is, unquestionably, the *formality* of its landscape.

Milton's effort, in all that he tells us of his Inferno, is to make it indefinite; Dante's to make it *definite*. Both, indeed, describe it as entered through gates; but, within the gate, all is wild and fenceless with Milton, having indeed its four

rivers,—the last vestige of the mediæval tradition,—but rivers which flow through a waste of mountain and moorland, and by "many a frozen, many a fiery alp." But Dante's Inferno is accurately separated into circles drawn with well-pointed compasses; mapped and properly surveyed in every direction, trenched in a thoroughly good style of engineering from depth to depth, and divided in the "*accurate* middle" (*dritto mezzo*) of its deepest abyss into a concentric series of ten moats and embankments, like those about a castle, with bridges from each embankment to the next; precisely in the manner of those bridges over Hiddekel and Euphrates, which Mr. Macaulay thinks so innocently designed, apparently not aware that he is also laughing at Dante. These larger fosses are of rock, and the bridges also; but as he goes further into detail, Dante tells us of various minor fosses and embankments, in which he anxiously points out to us not only the formality, but the neatness and perfectness, of the stone-work. For instance, in describing the river Phlegethon, he tells us that it was "paved with stone at the bottom, and at the sides, and *over the edges of the sides,*" just as the water is at the baths of Bulicame; and for fear we should think this embankment at all *larger* than it really was, Dante adds, carefully, that it was made just like the embankments of Ghent or Bruges against the sea, or

those in Lombardy which bank the Brenta, only "not so high, nor so wide," as any of these. And besides the trenches, we have two well-built castles; one like Ecbatana, with seven circuits of wall (and surrounded by a fair stream), wherein the great poets and sages of antiquity live; and another, a great fortified city with wall of iron, red-hot, and a deep foss round it, and full of "grave citizens,"—the city of Dis.

Now, whether this be in what we moderns call "good taste," or not, I do not mean just now to inquire,—Dante having nothing to do with taste, but with the facts of what he had seen; only, so far as the imaginative faculty of the two poets is concerned, note that Milton's vagueness is not the sign of imagination, but of its absence, so far as it is significative in the matter. For it does not follow, because Milton did not map out his Inferno as Dante did, that he *could* not have done so if he had chosen; only, it was the easier and less imaginative process to leave it vague than to define it. Imagination is always the seeing and asserting faculty; that which obscures or conceals may be judgment, or feeling, but not invention. The invention, whether good or bad, is in the accurate engineering, not in the fog and uncertainty.

When we pass with Dante from the Inferno to the Purgatory, we have indeed more light and air, but no more liberty; being now confined on

various ledges cut into a mountain-side, with a precipice on one hand and a vertical wall on the other; and, lest here also we should make any mistake about magnitudes, we are told that the ledges were eighteen feet wide, and that the ascent from one to the other was by steps, made like those which go up from Florence to the church of San Miniato.

Lastly, though in the Paradise there is perfect freedom and infinity of space, though for trenches we have planets, and for cornices constellations, yet there is more cadence, procession, and order among the redeemed souls than any others; they fly so as to describe letters and sentences in the air, and rest in circles, like rainbows, or determinate figures, as of a cross and an eagle; in which certain of the more glorified natures are so arranged as to form the eye of the bird, while those most highly blessed are arranged with their white crowds in leaflets, so as to form the image of a white rose in the midst of heaven.

Thus, throughout the poem, I conceive that the first striking character of its scenery is intense definition; precisely the reflection of that definiteness which we have already traced in pictorial art. But the second point which seems noteworthy is, that the flat ground and embanked trenches are reserved for the Inferno; and that the entire territory of the Purgatory is a mountain, thus marking the sense of that purifying

and perfecting influence in mountains which we saw the mediæval mind was so ready to suggest. The same general idea is indicated at the very commencement of the poem, in which Dante is overwhelmed by fear and sorrow in passing through a dark forest, but revives on seeing the sun touch the top of a hill, afterwards called by Virgil "the pleasant mount,—the cause and source of all delight."

While, however, we find this greater honor paid to mountains, I think we may perceive a much greater dread and dislike of woods. We saw that Homer seemed to attach a pleasant idea, for the most part, to forests; regarding them as sources of wealth and places of shelter; and we find constantly an idea of sacredness attached to them, as being haunted especially by the gods; so that even the wood which surrounds the house of Circe is spoken of as a sacred thicket, or rather as a sacred glade, or labyrinth of glades (of the particular word used I shall have more to say presently); and so the wood is sought as a kindly shelter by Ulysses, in spite of its wild beasts; and evidently regarded with great affection by Sophocles, for, in a passage which is always regarded by readers of Greek tragedy with peculiar pleasure, the aged and blind Œdipus, brought to rest in "the sweetest resting-place" in all the neighborhood of Athens, has the spot described to him as haunted perpetually by nightingales,

which sing "in the green glades and in the dark ivy, and in the thousand-fruited, sunless, and windless thickets of the god" (Bacchus); the idea of the complete shelter from wind and sun being here, as with Ulyssess, the uppermost one. After this come the usual staples of landscape,—narcissus, crocus, plenty of rain, olive-trees; and last, and the greatest boast of all,—" it is a good country for horses, and conveniently by the sea"; but the prominence and pleasantness of the thick wood in the thoughts of the writer are very notable; whereas to Dante the idea of a forest is exceedingly repulsive, so that, as just noticed, in the opening of his poem, he cannot express a general despair about life more strongly than by saying he was lost in a wood so savage and terrible, that "even to think or speak of it is distress,—it was so bitter,—it was something next door to death"; and one of the saddest scenes in all the Inferno is in a forest, of which the trees are haunted by lost souls; while, (with only one exception,) whenever the country is to be beautiful, we find ourselves coming out into open air and open meadows.

It is quite true that this is partly a characteristic not merely of Dante, or of mediæval writers, but of *Southern* writers; for the simple reason that the forest, being with them higher upon the hills, and more out of the way, than in the north, was generally a type of lonely and savage places;

while in England, the "greenwood" coming up to the very walls of the towns, it was possible to be "merry in the good greenwood," in a sense which an Italian could not have understood. Hence Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare send their favorites perpetually to the woods for pleasure or meditation; and trust their tender Canace, or Rosalind, or Helena, or Silvia, or Belphœbe, where Dante would have sent no one but a condemned spirit. Nevertheless, there is always traceable in the mediæval mind a dread of thick foliage, which was not present to that of a Greek; so that, even in the North, we have our sorrowful "children in the wood," and black huntsmen of the Hartz forests, and such other wood terrors; the principal reason for the difference being, that a Greek, being by no means given to travelling, regarded his woods as so much valuable property, and, if he ever went into them for pleasure, expected to meet one or two gods in the course of his walk, but no banditti; while a mediæval, much more of a solitary traveller, and expecting to meet with no gods in the thickets, but only with thieves, or a hostile ambush, or a bear, besides a great deal of troublesome ground for his horse, and a very serious chance, next to a certainty, of losing his way, naturally kept in the open ground as long as he could, and regarded the forests, in general, with anything but an eye of favor.

These, I think, are the principal points which must strike us, when we first broadly think of the poem as compared with classical work. Let us now go a little more into detail.

As Homer gave us an ideal landscape, which even a god might have been pleased to behold, so Dante gives us, fortunately, an ideal landscape, which is specially intended for the terrestial paradise. And it will doubtless be with some surprise, after our reflections above on the general tone of Dante's feelings, that we find ourselves here first entering a *forest,* and that even a *thick* forest. But there is a peculiar meaning in this. With any other poet than Dante, it might have been regarded as a wanton inconsistency. Not so with him; by glancing back to the two lines which explain the nature of Paradise, we shall see what he means by it. Virgil tells him, as he enters it, "Henceforward, take thine own pleasure for guide; thou art beyond the steep ways, and beyond all Art";—meaning, that the perfectly purified and noble human creature, having no pleasure but in right, is past all effort, and past all *rule.* Art has no existence for such a being. Hence, the first aim of Dante, in his landscape imagery, is to show evidence of this perfect liberty, and of the purity and sinlessness of the new nature, converting pathless ways into happy ones. So that all those fences and formalisms which had been needed for him in im-

perfection are removed in this paradise; and even the pathlessness of the wood, the most dreadful thing possible to him in his days of sin and shortcoming, is now a joy to him in his days of purity. And as the fencelessness and thicket of sin led to the fettered and fearful order of eternal punishment, so the fencelessness and thicket of the free virtue lead to the loving and constellated order of eternal happiness.

This forest, then, is very like that of Colonos in several respects,—in its peace and sweetness, and number of birds; it differs from it only in letting a light breeze through it, being therefore somewhat thinner than the Greek wood; the tender lines which tell of the voices of the birds mingling with the wind, and of the leaves all turning one way before it, have been more or less copied by every poet since Dante's time. They are, so far as I know, the sweetest passage of wood description which exists in literature.

Before, however, Dante has gone far in this wood,—that is to say, only so far as to have lost sight of the place where he entered it, or rather, I suppose, of the light under the boughs of the outside trees, and it must have been a very thin wood indeed if he did not do this in some quarter of a mile's walk,—he comes to a little river, three paces over, which bends the blades of grass to the left, with a meadow on the other side of it; and in this meadow

"A lady, graced with solitude, who went
Singing and setting flower by flower apart,
By which the path she walked on was besprent.
'Ah, lady beautiful, that basking art
In beams of love, if I may trust thy face,
Which useth to bear witness of the heart,
Let liking come on thee,' said I, 'to trace
Thy path a little closer to the shore,
Where I may reap the hearing of thy lay
Thou mindest me, how Proserpine of yore
Appeared in such a place, what time her mother
Lost her, and she the spring, forevermore.'
As, pointing downwards and to one another
Her feet, a lady bendeth in the dance,
And barely setteth one before the other,
Thus, on the scarlet and the saffron glance
Of flowers with motion maidenlike she bent
(Her modest eyelids drooping and askance);
And there she gave my wishes their content,
Approaching, so that her sweet melodies
Arrived upon mine ear with what they meant.
When first she came amongst the blades that rise,
Already wetted, from the goodly river,
She graced me by the lifting of her eyes."

CAYLEY.

I have given this passage at length, because, for our purposes, it is by much the most important, not only in Dante, but in the whole circle of poetry. This lady, observe, stands on the opposite side of the little stream, which, presently, she explains to Dante is Lethe, having the power to cause forgetfulness of all evil, and she stands just among the bent blades of grass at its edge.

She is first seen gathering flower from flower, then "passing continually the multitudinous flowers through her hands," smiling at the same time so brightly, that her first address to Dante is to prevent him from wondering at her, saying, "if he will remember the verse of the ninety-second Psalm, beginning 'Delectasti,' he will know why she is so happy."

And turning to the verse of the Psalm, we find it written, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad *through thy works.* I will triumph *in the works of thy hands";* or, in the very words in which Dante would read it,—

> "Quia delectasti me, Domine, in factura tua,
> Et in operibus manuum Tuarum exultabo."

Now we could not for an instant have had any difficulty in understanding this, but that, some way farther on in the poem, this lady is called Matilda, and it is with reason supposed by the commentators to be the great Countess Matilda of the eleventh century; notable for her ceaseless activity, her brilliant political genius, her perfect piety, and her deep reverence for the see of Rome. This Countess Matilda is therefore Dante's guide in the terrestrial paradise, as Beatrice is afterwards in the celestial; each of them having a spiritual and symbolic character in their glorified state, yet retaining their definite personality.

The question is, then, what is the symbolic character of the Countess Matilda, as the guiding spirit of the terrestrial paradise? Before Dante had entered this paradise he had rested on a step of shelving rock, and as he watched the stars he slept, and dreamed, and thus tells us what he saw:—

> "A lady, young and beautiful, I dreamed,
> Was passing o'er a lea; and, as she came,
> Methought I saw her ever and anon
> Bending to cull the flowers; and thus she sang:
> 'Know ye, whoever of my name would ask,
> That I am Leah; for my brow to weave
> A garland, these fair hands unwearied ply;
> To please me at the crystal mirror, here
> I deck me. But my sister Rachel, she
> Before her glass abides the livelong day,
> Her radiant eyes beholding, charmed no less
> Than I with this delightful task. Her joy
> In contemplation, as in labor mine.' "

This vision of Rachel and Leah has been always, and with unquestionable truth, received as a type of the Active and Contemplative life, and as an introduction to the two divisions of the Paradise which Dante is about to enter. Therefore the unwearied spirit of the Countess Matilda is understood to represent the Active life, which forms the felicity of Earth; and the spirit of Beatrice the Contemplative life, which forms the felicity of Heaven. This interpretation appears at first straightforward and certain, but it

has missed count of exactly the most important fact in the two passages which we have to explain. Observe: Leah gathers the flowers to decorate *herself,* and delights in *Her Own* Labor. Rachel sits silent, contemplating herself, and delights in *Her Own* Image. These are the types of the Unglorified Active and Contemplative powers of Man. But Beatrice and Matilda are the same powers, Glorified. And how are they Glorified? Leah took delight in her own labor; but Matilda—"in operibus *manuum Tuarum*"—*in God's labor;*—Rachel in the sight of her own face; Beatrice in the sight of *God's face.*

And thus, when afterwards Dante sees Beatrice on her throne, and prays her that, when he himself shall die, she would receive him with kindness, Beatrice merely looks down for an instant, and answers with a single smile, then "towards the eternal fountain turns."

Therefore it is evident that Dante distinguishes in both cases, not between earth and heaven, but between perfect and imperfect happiness, whether in earth or heaven. The active life which has only the service of man for its end, and therefore gathers flowers, with Leah, for its own decoration, is indeed happy, but not perfectly so; it has only the happiness of the dream, belonging essentially to the dream of human life, and passing away with it. But the active life which labors for the more and more discovery of

God's work, is perfectly happy, and is the life of the terrestrial paradise, being a true foretaste of heaven, and beginning in earth, as heaven's vestibule. So also the contemplative life which is concerned with human feeling and thought and beauty—the life which is in earthly poetry and imagery of noble earthly emotion—is happy, but it is the happiness of the dream; the contemplative life which has God's person and love in Christ for its object, has the happiness of eternity. But because this higher happiness is also begun here on earth, Beatrice descends to earth; and when revealed to Dante first, he sees the image of the twofold personality of Christ reflected in her *eyes;* as the flowers, which are, to the mediæval heart, the chief work of God, are forever passing through Matilda's hands.

Now, therefore, we see that Dante, as the great prophetic exponent of the heart of the Middle Ages, has, by the lips of the spirit of Matilda, declared the mediæval faith,—that all perfect active life was "the expression of man's delight *in God's work*"; and that all their political and warlike energy, as fully shown in the mortal life of Matilda, was yet inferior and impure,—the energy of the dream,—compared with that which on the opposite bank of Lethe stood "choosing flower from flower." And what joy and peace there were in this work is marked by Matilda's being the person who draws Dante

through the stream of Lethe, so as to make him forget all sin, and all sorrow: throwing her arms round him, she plunges his head under the waves of it; then draws him through, crying to him, *"Hold me, hold me"* (Tiemmi, tiemmi), and so presents him, thus bathed, free from all painful memory, at the feet of the spirit of the more heavenly contemplation.

DANTE'S CREED

From the Foreign Quarterly Review, No. LXV. Art. I.

Another thought sustained him, and was the *end* towards which he directed all the energies which love had roused within him; and this must be specially insisted upon, because, wonderfully enough! even in the present day it is either misunderstood or lightly treated by all who busy themselves about Dante. This aim is the *national aim,*—the same desire that vibrates instinctively in the bosoms of twenty-two millions of men, and which is the secret of the immense popularity Dante has in Italy. This idea and the almost superhuman constancy with which he pursued it, render Dante the most complete individual incarnation of this aim that we know, and, notwithstanding, *this* is just the point upon which his biographers are the most uncertain. . . .

It must be said and insisted upon, that this idea of national greatness is the leading thought in all that Dante did or wrote. Never man loved his country with a more exalted or fervent love; never had man such projects of magnificent and exalted destinies for her. All who consider Dante as a Guelph or a Ghibelline grovel at the base of the monument which he desired to raise to Italy. We are not here required to give an opinion upon the degree of feasibility of Dante's ideas,—the future must decide this point. What we have to do is to show what Dante aimed at, in order that those who desire to come to a just estimate of his life may have sufficient grounds to judge him. This we shall do as rapidly as possible, relying upon passages in the *Convito,* and his little treatise *De Monarchia,* for our authority. The following, then, is a summary of what, in the thirteenth century, Dante believed.

God is one,—the universe is one thought of God,—the universe therefore is one. All things come from God,—they all participate, more or less, in the Divine nature, according to the end for which they are created. They all float towards different points over the great ocean of existence, but they are all moved by the same will. Flowers in the garden of God all merit our love according to the degree of excellence he has bestowed upon each; of these MAN is the

most eminent. Upon him God has bestowed more of his own nature than upon any other creature. In the continuous scale of being, that man whose nature is the most degraded touches upon the animal; he whose nature is the most noble approaches that of the angel. Everything that comes from the hand of God tends towards the perfection of which it is susceptible, and man more fervently and more vigorously than all the rest. There is this difference between him and other creatures, that his perfectibility is what Dante calls *possible,* meaning *indefinite.* Coming from the bosom of God, the human soul incessantly aspires towards Him, and endeavors by holiness and knowledge to become reunited with Him. Now the life of the individual man is too short and too weak to enable him to satisfy that yearning in this world; but around him, before him, stands the whole human race to which he is allied by his social nature,—that never dies, but works through one generation of its members after another onwards, in the road to eternal truth. Mankind is one. God has made nothing in vain, and if there exists a multitude, a *collective* of men, it is because there is *one* aim for them all,—one work to be accomplished by them all. Whatever this aim may be, it does certainly exist, and we must endeavor to discover and attain it. Mankind, then, ought to work together, in order that all the intellectual powers

that are bestowed amongst them may receive the highest possible development, whether in the sphere of thought or action. It is only by harmony, consequently by association, that this is possible. Mankind must be *one,* even as God is *one;*—one in organization, as it is already *one* in its principle. Unity is taught by the manifest design of God in the external world, and by the necessity of an aim. Now unity seeks for something by which it may be represented, and this is found in a unity of government. There must then of necessity be some centre to which the general inspiration of mankind ascends, thence to flow down again in the form of LAW,—a power strong in unity, and in the supporting advice of the higher intellects naturally destined to rule, providing with calm wisdom for all the different functions which are to be fulfilled,—the distinct employments,—itself performing the part of pilot, of supreme chief, in order to bring to the highest perfection what Dante calls "the universal religion of human nature"; that is, empire,—IMPERIUM. It will maintain concord amongst the rulers of states, and this peace will diffuse itself from thence into towns, from the towns among each cluster of habitations, into every house, into the bosom of each man. But where is the seat of this empire to be?

At this question Dante quits all analytic argumentation, and takes up the language of syn-

thetical and absolute affirmation, like a man in whom the least expression of doubt excites astonishment.

He is no longer a *philosopher,* he is a *believer.* He shows Rome, the Holy City, as he calls her,—the city whose very stones he declares to be worthy of reverence,—"*There* is the seat of empire." There never was, and there never will be, a people endowed with more gentleness for the exercise of command, with more vigor to maintain it, and more capacity to acquire it, than the Italian nation, and above all, the Holy Roman people.

THE DIVINA COMMEDIA[1]

From the German of Schelling.

1850.

In the sanctuary where Religion "is married to immortal verse" stands Dante as high-priest, and consecrates all modern Art to its vocation. Not as a solitary poem, but representing the whole class of the New Poetry, and itself a sep-

[1] This was originally published in the Volume of "Outre Mer" with the following note:

[1] [In the following elaborate specimen of literary criticism there are many passages which will be very obscure not to say unintelligible, to those who are not familiar with the philosophic phraseology of the Germans. The student of Dante, however, will find in it many hints and suggestions worthy his consideration. It cannot be otherwise than interesting to see two such minds as those of Schelling and Dante brought into contact; and to hear what the German philosopher has to say of the Italian poet.]

arate class, stands the "Divine Comedy," so entirely unique, that any theory drawn from peculiar forms is quite inadequate to it;—a world by itself, it demands its own peculiar theory. The predicate of Divine was given it by its author,[1] because it treats of theology and things divine; Comedy he called it, after the simplest notion of this and its opposite kind, on account of its fearful beginning and its happy ending, and because the mixed nature of the poem, whose material is now lofty and now lowly, rendered a mixed kind of style necessary.

One readily perceives, however, that, according to the common notion, it cannot be called Dramatic, because it represents no circumscribed action. So far as Dante himself may be looked upon as a hero, who serves only as a thread for the measureless series of visions and pictures, and remains rather passive than active, the poem seems to approach nearer to a Romance; yet this definition does not completely exhaust it. Nor can we call it Epic, in the usual acceptation of the word, since there is no regular sequence in the events represented. To look upon it as a Didactic poem is likewise impossible, because it is written with a far less restricted form and aim than that of teaching. It belongs, therefore, to none of these classes in particular, nor is it merely a compound of them; but an entirely

[1] The title of "Divina" was not given to the poem till long after Dante's death. It first appears in the edition of 1516.— Tr.

unique, and as it were organic, mixture of all their elements, not to be reproduced by any arbitrary rules of art,—an absolute individuality, comparable with itself alone, and with naught else.

The material of the poem is, in general terms, the express identity of the poet's age;—the interpenetration of the events thereof with the ideas of Religion, Science, and Poetry in the loftiest genius of that century. Our intention is not to consider it in its immediate reference to its age; but rather in its universal application, and as the archetype of all modern Poetry.

The necessary law of this poetry, down to the still indefinitely distant point where the great epic of modern times, which hitherto has announced itself only rhapsodically and in broken glimpses, shall present itself as a perfect whole, is this,—that the individual gives shape and unity to that portion of the world which is revealed to him, and out of the materials of his time, its history, and its science, creates his own mythology. For as the ancient world is, in general, the world of classes, so the modern is that of individuals. In the former, the Universal is in truth the Particular, the race acts as an individual; in the latter, the Individual is the point of departure, and becomes the Universal. For this reason, in the former all things are permanent and imperishable: number likewise is of no account, since the

Universal idea coincides with that of the Individual;—in the later constant mutation is the fixed law; no narrow circle limits its ends, but one which through Individuality widens itself to infinitude. And since Universality belongs to the essence of poetry, it is a necessary condition that the Individual through the highest peculiarity should again become Universal, and by his complete speciality become again absolute. Thus, through the perfect individuality and uniqueness of his poem, Dante is the creator of modern art, which without this arbitrary necessity, and necessary arbitrariness, cannot be imagined.

From the very beginning of Greek Poetry, we see it clearly separated from Science and Philosophy, as in Homer; and this process of separation continued until the poets and the philosophers became the antipodes of each other. They in vain, by allegorical interpretations of the Homeric poems, sought artificially to create a harmony between the two. In modern times Science has preceded Poetry and Mythology, which cannot be Mythology without being universal, and drawing into its circle all the elements of the then existing culture, Science, Religion, and even Art, and joining in a perfect unity the material not only of the present but of the past. Into this struggle (since Art demands something definite and limited, while the spirit of the world rushes towards the unlimited, and with ceaseless

power sweeps down all barriers) must the Individual enter, but with absolute freedom seek to rescue permanent shapes from the fluctuations of time, and within arbitrarily assumed forms to give to the structure of his poem, by its absolute peculiarity, internal necessity and external universality.

This Dante has done. He had before him, as material, the history of the present as well as of the past. He could not elaborate this into a pure Epos, partly on account of its nature, partly because, in doing this, he would have excluded other elements of the culture of his time. To its completeness belonged also the astronomy, the theology, and the philosophy of the time. To these he could not give expression in a didactic poem, for by so doing he would again have limited himself. Consequently, in order to make his poem universal, he was obliged to make it historical. An invention entirely uncontrolled, and proceeding from its own individuality, was necessary to unite these materials, and form them into an organic whole. To represent the ideas of Philosophy and Theology in symbols was impossible, for there then existed no symbolic Mythology. He could quite as little make his poem purely allegorical, for then, again, it could not be historical. It was necessary, therefore, to make it an entirely unique mixture of Allegory and History. In the em-

blematic poetry of the ancients no clew of this kind was possible. The Individual only could lay hold of it, and only an uncontrolled invention follow it.

The poem of Dante is not allegorical in the sense that its figures only signified something else, without having any separate existence independent of the thing signified. On the other hand, none of them is independent of the thing signified in such a way as to be at once the idea itself and more than an allegory of it. There is therefore in his poem an entirely unique mean between Allegory and symbolic-objective Form. There is no doubt, and the poet has himself elsewhere declared it, that Beatrice, for example, is an Allegory, namely, of Theology. So her companions; so many other characters. But at the same time they count for themselves, and appear on the scene as historic personages, without on that account being symbols.

In this respect Dante is archetypal, since he has proclaimed what the modern poet has to do, in order to embody into a poetic whole the entire history and culture of his age,—the only mythological material which lies before him. He must, from absolute arbitrariness, join together the allegorical and historical: he must be allegorical, (and he is so, too, against his will,) because he cannot be symbolical; and he must be historical, because he wishes to be poetical. In

this respect his invention is always peculiar, a world by itself, and altogether characteristic.

The only German poem of universal plan unites together in a similar manner the outermost extremes in the aspirations of the times, by a very peculiar invention of a subordinate mythology, in the character of Faust; although, in the Aristophanic meaning of the word, it may far better be called a Comedy, and in another and more poetic sense Divine, than the poem of Dante.

The energy with which the individual embodies the singular mixture of the materials which lie before him in his age and his life, determines the measure in which he possesses mythological power. Dante's personages possess a kind of eternity from the position in which he places them, and which is eternal; but not only the actual which he draws from his own time, as the story of Ugolino and the like, but also what is pure invention, as the death of Ulysses and his companions, has in the connection of his poem a real mythological truth.

It would be of but subordinate interest to represent by itself the Philosophy, Physics, and Astronomy of Dante, since his true peculiarity lies only in his manner of fusing them with his poetry. The Ptolemaic system, which to a certain degree is the foundation of his poetic structure, has already in itself a mythological color-

ing. If, however, his philosophy is to be characterized in general as Aristotelian, we must not understand by this the pure Peripatetic philosophy, but a peculiar union of the same with the ideas of the Platonic then entertained, as may be proved by many passages of his poem.

We will not dwell upon the power and solidity of separate passages, the simplicity and endless naïveté of separate pictures, in which he expresses his philosophical views, as the well-known description of the soul which comes from the hand of God as a little girl "weeping and laughing in its childish sport," a guileless soul, which knows nothing, save that, moved by its joyful Creator, "willingly it turns to that which gives it pleasure";—we speak only of the general symbolic form of the whole, in whose absoluteness, more than in anything else, the universal value and immortality of this poem is recognized.

If the union of Philosophy and Poetry, even in their most subordinate synthesis, is understood as making a didactic poem, it becomes necessary, since the poem must be without any external end and aim, that the intention (of instructing) should lose itself in it, and be changed into an absoluteness, (*in eine Absolutheit verwandelt*) so that the poem may seem to exist for its own sake. And this is only conceivable, when Science (considered as a picture of the universe, and in perfect harmony therewith, as the most

original and beautiful Poetry) is in itself already poetical. Dante's poem is a much higher interpenetration of Science and Poetry, and so much the more must its form, even in its freer self-existence, be adapted to the universal type of the world's aspect.

The division of the universe, and the arrangement of the materials according to the three kingdoms of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, independently of the peculiar meaning of these ideas in Christian theology, are also a general symbolic form, so that one does not see why under the same form every remarkable age should not have its own Divine Comedy. As in the modern Drama the form of five acts is assumed as the usual one, because every event may be regarded in its Beginning, its Progress, its Culmination, its Dénouement, and its final Consummation, so this trichotomy, or threefold division of Dante in the higher prophetic poetry, which is to be the expression of the whole age, is conceivable as a general form, which in its filling up may be infinitely varied, as by the power of original invention it can always be quickened into new life. Not alone, however, as an external form, but as an emblematical expression of the internal type of all Science and Poetry, is that form eternal, and capable of embracing in itself the three great objects of science and culture,—Nature, History, and Art. Nature,

as the birth of all things, is the eternal Night; and as that unity through which these are in themselves, it is the aphelion of the universe, the point of farthest removal from God, the true centre. Life and History, whose nature is gradual progress, are only a process of clarification, a transition to an absolute condition. This can nowhere be found save in Art, which anticipates eternity, is the paradise of life, and is truly in the centre.

Dante's poem, therefore, viewed from all sides, is not an isolated work of a particular age, a particular stage of culture; but it is archetypal, by the universal interest which it unites with the most absolute individuality,—by its universality, in virtue of which it excludes no side of life and culture,—and, finally, by its form, which is not a peculiar type, but the type of the theory of the universe in general.

The peculiar internal arrangement of the poem certainly cannot possess this universal interest, since it is formed upon the ideas of the time, and the peculiar views of the poet. On the other hand, as is to be expected from a work so artistic and full of purpose, the general inner type is again externally imaged forth, through the form, color, sound, of the three great divisions of the poem.

From the extraordinary nature of his material, Dante needed for the form of his creations in

detail some kind of credentials which only the Science of his time could give, and which for him are, so to speak, the Mythology and the general basis which supports the daring edifice of his inventions. But even in the details he remains true to his design of being allegorical, without ceasing to be historical and poetical. Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise are, as it were, only his system of Theology in its concrete and architectural development. The proportion, number, and relations which he observes in their internal structure were prescribed by this science, and herein he renounced intentionally the freedom of invention, in order to give, by means of form, necessity and limitation to his poem, which in its materials was unlimited. The universal sanctity and significancy of numbers is another external form upon which his poetry rests. So in general the entire logical and syllogistic lore of that age is for him only form, which must be granted to him in order to attain to that region in which his poetry moves.

And yet in this adherence to religious and philosophical notions, as the most universally interesting thing which his age offered, Dante never seeks an ordinary kind of poetic probability; but rather renounces all intention of flattering the baser senses. His first entrance into Hell takes place, as it should take place, without any unpoetical attempt to assign a motive

for it or to make it intelligible, in a condition like that of a Vision, without, however, any intention of making it appear such. His being drawn up by Beatrice's eyes, through which the divine power is communicated to him, he expresses in a single line: what is wonderful in his own adventures he immediately changes to a likeness of the mysteries of religion, and gives it credibility by a yet higher mystery, as when he makes his entrance into the moon, which he compares to that of light into the unbroken surface of water, an image of God's incarnation.

To show the perfection of art and the depth of purpose which was carried even into the minor details of the inner structure of the three worlds, would be a science in itself. This was recognized shortly after the poet's death by his nation, in their appointing a distinct Lectureship upon Dante, which was first filled by Boccaccio.

But not only do the several incidents in each of the three parts of the poem allow the universal character of the first form to shine through them, but the law thereof expresses itself yet more definitely in the inner and spiritual rhythm, by which they are contradistinguished from each other. The Inferno, as it is the most fearful in its objects, is likewise the strongest in expression, the severest in diction, and in its very words dark and awful. In one portion of the Purgatorio deep silence reigns, for the lamentations of

the lower world grow mute; upon its summits, the forecourts of Heaven, all becomes Color: the Paradiso is the true music of the spheres.

The variety and difference of the punishments in the Inferno are conceived with almost unexampled invention. Between the crime and the punishment there is never any other than a poetic relation. Dante's spirit is not daunted by what is terrible; nay, he goes to its extreme limits. But it could be shown, in every case, that he never ceases to be sublime, and in consequence truly beautiful. For that which men who are not capable of comprehending the whole have sometimes pointed out as low, is not so in their sense of the term, but it is a necessary element of the mixed nature of the poem, on account of which Dante himself called it a Comedy. The hatred of evil, the scorn of a godlike spirit, which are expressed in Dante's fearful composition, are not the inheritance of common souls. It is indeed very doubtful still, though quite generally believed, whether his banishment from Florence, after he had previously dedicated his poetry to Love, first spurred on his spirit, naturally inclined to whatever was earnest and extraordinary, to the highest invention, in which he breathed forth the whole of his life, of the destiny of his heart and his country, together with his indignation thereat. But the vengeance which he takes in the Inferno, he takes in the

name of the Day of Judgment, as the elected Judge with prophetic power, not from personal hate, but with a pious soul roused by the abominations of the times, and a love of his native land long dead in others, as he has himself represented in a pasage in the Paradiso, where he says:—

> "If e'er it happen that the Poem sacred,
> To which both Earth and Heaven have lent their hand,
> Till it hath made me meagre many a year,
> Conquer the cruelty that shuts me out
> Of the fair sheepfold, where a lamb I slumbered,
> An enemy to the wolves that war upon it,
> With other voice forthwith, with other fleece,
> The poet shall return, and at the font
> Baptismal shall he take the crown of laurel."

He tempers the horror of the torments of the damned by his own feeling for them, which at the end of so much suffering so overwhelms him that he is ready to weep, and Virgil says to him, "Wherefore then art thou troubled?"

It has already been remarked, that the greater part of the punishments of the Inferno are symbolical of the crimes for which they are inflicted, but many of them are so in a far more general relation. Of this kind is, in particular, the representation of a metamorphosis, in which two natures are mutually interchanged, and their substance transmitted. No metamorphosis of Antiquity can compare with this for invention, and

if a naturalist or a didactic poet were able to sketch with such power emblems of the eternal metamorphoses of nature, he might congratulate himself upon it.

As we have already remarked, the Inferno is not only distinguished from the other parts by the external form of its representation, but also by the circumstance that it is peculiarly the realm of forms, and consequently the plastic part of the poem. The Purgatorio must be recognized as the picturesque part. Not only are the penances here imposed upon sinners at times pictorially treated, even to brightness of coloring, but the journey up the holy mountain of Purgatory presents in detail a rapid succession of shifting landscapes, scenes, and manifold play of light; until upon its outermost boundary, when the poet has reached the waters of Lethe, the highest pomp of painting and color displays itself, in the picturing of the divine primeval forest of this region, of the celestial clearness of the water overcast with its eternal shadow, of the maiden whom he meets upon its banks, and the descent of Beatrice in a cloud of flowers, beneath a white veil, crowned with olive, wrapped in a green mantle, and "vested in colors of the living flame."

The poet has urged his way to light through the very heart of the earth: in the darkness of the lower world forms alone could be distin-

guished: in Purgatory light is kindled, but still in connection with earthly matter, and becomes color. In Paradise there remains nothing but the pure music of the light; reflection ceases, and the Poet rises gradually to behold the colorless pure essence of Deity itself.

The astronomical system which the age of the poet invested with a mythological value, the nature of the stars and of the measure of their motion, are the ground upon which his inventions, in this part of the poem, rest. And if he in this sphere of the unconditioned still suffers degrees and differences to exist, he again removes them by the glorious word which he puts into the mouth of one of the sister-souls whom he meets in the moon, that "every *Where* in heaven is Paradise."

The plan of the poem renders it natural that, on the very ascent through Paradise, the loftiest speculations of theology should be discussed. His deep reverence for this science is symbolized by his love of Beatrice. In proportion as the field of vision enlarges itself into the purely Universal, it is necessary that Poetry should become Music, form vanish, and that, in this point of view, the Inferno should appear the most poetic part of the work. But in this work it is absolutely impossible to take things separately; and the peculiar excellence of each separate part is authenticated and recognized only through its harmony with the whole. If the relation of the

three parts to the whole is perceived, we shall necessarily recognize the Paradiso as the purely musical and lyrical portion, even in the design of the poet, who expresses this in the external form by the frequent use of the Latin words of Church hymns.

The marvelous grandeur of the poem, which gleams forth in the mingling of all the elements of poetry and art, reaches in this way a perfect manifestation. This divine work is not plastic, not picturesque, not musical, but all of these at once and in accordant harmony. It is not dramatic, not epic, not lyric, but a peculiar, unique, and unexampled mingling of all these.

I think I have shown, at the same time, that it is prophetic, and typical of all the modern Poetry. It embraces all its characteristics, and springs out of the intricately mingled materials of the same, as the first growth, stretching itself above the earth and toward the heavens,—the first fruit of transfiguration. Those who would become acquainted with the poetry of modern times, not superficially, but at its fountain-head, may train themselves by this great and mighty spirit, in order to know by what means the whole of the modern time may be embraced in its entireness, and that it is not held together by a loosely woven band. They who have no vocation for this can apply to themselves the words at the beginning of the first part,—

"Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' intrate."

LE DANTE

Voltaire, Dictionnaire Philosophique.

Vous voulez connaître le Dante. Dès Italiens l'appellent divin; mais c'est une divinité cachée; peu de gens entendent ses oracles; il a des commentateurs: c'est peut-être encore une raison de plus pour n'être pas compris. Sa réputation s'affermira toujours, parce qu'on ne le lit guère. Il y a de lui une vingtaine de traits qu'on sait par cœur: cela suffit pour s'épargner la peine d'examiner le reste.

Ce divin Dante fut, dit-on, un homme assez malheureux. Ne croyez pas qu'il fut divin de son temps, ni qu'il fut prophète chez lui. Il est vrai qu'il fut prieur, non pas prieur de moines, mais prieur de Florence, c'est-à-dire l'un des sénateurs.

Il était né en 1260, à ce que disent ses compatriotes. Bayle, qui écrivait à Rotterdam, *currente calamo,* pour son libraire, environ quatre siècles entiers après le Dante, le fit naître en 1265,[1] et je n'en estime Bayle ni plus ni moins pour s'être trompé de cinq ans: la grande affaire est de ne se tromper ni en fait de goût ni en fait de raisonnemens.

Les arts commençaient alors à naître dans la patrie du Dante. Florence était comme Athènes,

1 Dante naquit en effet à Florence, en 1265, au mois de mai.

pleine d'esprit, de grandeur, de légèreté, d'inconstance et de factions. La faction blanche avait un grand crédit: elle se nommait ainsi du nom de la signora Bianca. Le parti opposé s'intitulait le *parti des noirs,* pour mieux se distinguer des *blancs.* Ces deux partis ne suffisaient pas aux Florentins. Ils avaient encore les *guelfes* et les *gibelins.* La plupart des blancs étaient *gibelins* du parti des empereurs, et les noirs penchaient pour les *guelfes* attachés aux papes.

Toutes ces factions aimaient la liberté, et fesaient pourtant ce qu'elles pouvaient pour la détruire. Le pape Boniface VIII. voulut profiter de ces divisions pour anéantir le pouvoir des empereurs en Italie. Il déclara Charles de Valois, frère du roi de France Philippe-le-Bel, son vicaire en Toscane. Le vicaire vint bien armé, chassa les *blancs* et les *gibelins,* et se fit détester des *noirs* et des *guelfes.* Le Dante était *blanc* et *gibelin;* il fut chassé des premiers, et sa maison rasée. On peut juger de là s'il fut le reste de sa vie affectionné à la maison de France et aux papes; on prétend pourtant qu'il alla faire un voyage à Paris, et que pour se désennuyer il se fit théologien, et disputa vigoureusement dans les écoles. On ajoute que l'empereur Henri VII. ne fit rien pour lui, tout *gibelin* qu'il était; qu'il alla chez Frédéric d'Aragon, roi de Sicile, et qu'il en revint aussi pauvre qu'il y était allé. Il fut réduit au marquis de Malaspina, et au grand-kan

de Vérone. Le marquis et le grand-kan ne le dédommagèrent pas; il mourut pauvre à Ravenne, à l'âge de cinquante six ans. Ce fut dans ces divers lieux qu'il composa sa *Comédie de l'enfer, du purgatoire et du paradis;* on a regardé ce salmigondis comme un beau poëme épique.

Il trouva d'abord à l'entrée de l'enfer un lion et une louve. Tout d'un coup Virgile se présente à lui pour l'encourager; Virgile lui dit qu'il est né Lombard; c'est précisément comme si Homère disait qu'il est né Turc. Virgile offre de faire au Dante les honneurs de l'enfer et du purgatoire, et de le mener jusqu'à la porte de saint Pierre; mais il avoue qu'il ne pourra pas entrer avec lui.

Cependant Charon les passe tous deux dans sa barque. Virgile lui raconte que, peu de temps après son arrivée en enfer, il y vit un être puissant qui vint chercher les ames d'Abel, de Noé, d'Abraham, de Moïse, de David. En avançant chemin, ils découvrent dans l'enfer des demeures très agréables: dans l'une sont Homère, Horace, Ovide et Lucain; dans une autre on voit Électre, Hector, Énée, Lucrèce, Brutus et le Turc Saladin; dans une troisième, Socrate, Platon, Hippocrate et l'Arabe Averroès.

Enfin paraît le véritable enfer, où Pluton juge les condamnés. Le voyageur y reconnaît quelques cardinaux, quelques papes, et beaucoup de Florentins. Tout cela est-il dans le style

comique? Non. Tout est-il dans le genre héroïque? Non. Dans quel goût est donc ce poëme? Dans un goût bizarre.

Mais il y a des vers si heureux et si naïfs, qu'ils n'ont point vieilli depuis quatre cents ans, et qu'ils ne vieilliront jamais. Un poëme d'ailleurs où l'on met des papes en enfer réveille beaucoup l'attention; et les commentateurs épuisent toute la sagacité de leur esprit à déterminer au juste qui sont ceux que le Dante a damnés, et à ne se pas tromper dans une matière si grave.

On a fondé une chaire, une lecture pour expliquer cet auteur classique. Vous me demanderez comment l'inquisition ne s'y oppose pas. Je vous répondrai que l'inquisition entend raillerie en Italie; elle sait bien que des plaisanteries en vers ne peuvent point faire de mal: vous en allez juger par cette petite traduction très libre d'un morceau du chant vingt-troisième; il s'agit d'un damné de la connaissance de l'auteur. Le damné parle ainsi:—

Je m'appelais le comte de Guidon;
Je fus sur terre et soldat et poltron;
Puis m'enrôlai sous saint François d'Assise,
Afin qu'un jour le bout de son cordon
Me donnât place en la céleste église;
Et j'y serais sans ce pape félon,
Qui m'ordonna de servir sa feintise,
Et me rendit aux griffes du démon.
Voici le fait. Quand j'étais sur la terre,
Vers Rimini je fis long-temps la guerre,

Moins, je l'avoue, en héros qu'en fripon.
L'art de fourber me fit un grand renom.
Mais quand mon chef eut porté poil grison,
Temps de retraite où convient la sagesse,
Le repentir vint ronger ma vieillesse,
Et j'eus recours à la confession.
O repentir tardif et peu durable!
Le bon saint-père en ce temps guerroyait,
Non le soudan, non le Turc intraitable,
Mais les chrétiens qu'en vrai Turc il pillait.
Or, sans respect pour tiare et tonsure,
Pour saint François, son froc et sa ceinture;
Frère, dit-il, il me convient d'avoir
Incessamment Préneste en mon pouvoir.
Conseille-moi, cherche sous ton capuce
Quelque beau tour, quelque gentille astuce,
Pour ajouter en bref à mes états
Ce qui me tente et ne m'appartient pas.
J'ai les deux clefs du ciel en ma puissance.
De Célestin la dévote imprudence
S'en servit mal, et moi je sais ouvrir
Et refermer le ciel à mon plaisir.
Si tu me sers, ce ciel est ton partage.
Je le servis, et trop bien: dont j'enrage.
Il eut Préneste, et la mort me saisit.
Lors devers moi saint François descendit,
Comptant au ciel amener ma bonne ame;
Mais Belzébut vint en poste, et lui dit:
Monsieur d'Assise, arrêtez: je réclame
Ce conseiller du saint-père, il est mien;
Bon saint François, que chacun ait le sien
Lors tout penaud le bon homme d'Assise
M'abandonnait au grand diable d'enfer.
Je lui criai: Monsieur de Lucifer,
Je suis un saint, voyez ma robe grise;

Je fus absous par le chef de l'église.
J'aurai toujours, répondit le démon,
Un grand respect pour l'absolution:
On est lavé de ses vieilles sottises,
Pourvu qu'après autres ne soient commises.
J'ai fait souvent cette distinction
A tes pareils; et grace à l'Italie,
Le diable sait de la théologie.
Il dit, et rit: je ne répliquai rien
A Belzébut; il raisonnait trop bien.
Lors il m'empoigne, et d'un bras raide et ferme
Il appliqua sur mon triste épiderme
Vingt coups de fouet, dont bien fort il me cuit:
Que Dieu le rende à Boniface huit.

LA DIVINE COMÉDIE

Rivarol, Etude sur Dante.

Etrange et admirable entreprise! Remonter du dernier gouffre des Enfers, jusqu'au sublime sanctuaire des Cieux; embrasser la double hiérarchie des vices et des vertus, l'extrême misère et la suprême félicité, le temps et l'éternité; peindre à-la-fois l'ange et l'homme, l'auteur de tout mal, et le saint des saints! Aussi on ne peut se figurer la sensation prodigieuse que fit sur toute l'Italie ce Poème national, rempli de hardiesses contre les Papes; d'allusions aux événemens récens et aux questions qui agitoient les esprits; écrit d'ailleurs dans une langue au berceau, qui prenoit entre les mains du Dante une fierté qu'elle n'eut plus après lui, et qu'on ne lui connoissoit pas avant.

L'effet qu'il produisit fut tel, que lorsque son langage rude et original ne fut presque plus entendu, et qu'on eut perdu la clef des allusions, sa grande réputation ne laissa pas de s'étendre dans un espace de cinq cents ans, comme ces fortes commotions dont l'ébranlement se propage à d'immenses distances.

L'Italie donna le nom de *divin* à ce Poème et à son Auteur; et quoiqu'on l'eût laissé mourir en exil, cependant ses amis et ses nombreux admirateurs eurent assez de crédit, sept à huit ans après sa mort, pour faire condamner le Poète Cecco d'Ascoli à être brûlé publiquement à Florence, sous prétexte de magie et d'hérésie, mais réellement parce qu'il avoit osé critiquer le Dante. Sa patrie lui éleva des monumens, et envoya, par décret du Sénat, une députation à un de ses petits-fils, qui refusa d'entrer dans la maison et les biens de son aïeul. Trois Papes ont depuis accepté la dédicace de LA DIVINA COMEDIA, et on a fondé des chaires pour expliquer les oracles de cette obscure divinité.[1]

Les longs commentaires n'ont pas éclairci les difficultés, la foule des Commentateurs n'ayant vu par-tout que la théologie: mais ils auroient dû

[1] Le Dante n'a pas donné le nom de *Comédie* aux trois grandes parties de son Poème, parce qu'il finit d'une manière heureuse, ayant le Paradis pour dénoûment, ainsi que l'ont cru les Commentateurs: mais parce qu'ayant honoré l'Enéide du nom d'ALTA TRAGEDIA, il a voulu prendre un titre plus humble, qui convint mieux au style qu'il emploie, si différent en effet de celui de son maître.

voir aussi la mythologie, car le Poète les a mêlées. Ils veulent tous absolument que le Dante soit *la partie animale,* ou les sens; Virgile, *la philosophie morale,* ou la simple raison; et Béatrix, *la lumière révélée,* ou la théologie. Ainsi, l'homme grossier représenté par le Dante, après s'être égaré dans une forêt obscure, qui signifie, suivant eux, les orages de la jeunesse, est ramené par la raison à la connoissance des vices et des peines qu'ils méritent; c'est-à-dire, aux Enfers et au Purgatoire: mais quand il se présente aux portes du Ciel, Béatrix se montre, et Virgile disparoît. C'est la raison qui fuit devant la théologie.

Il est difficile de se figurer qu'on puisse faire un beau Poème avec de telles idées; et ce qui doit nous mettre en garde contre ces sortes d'explications, c'est qu'il n'est rien qu'on ne puisse plier sous l'allégorie avec plus ou moins de bonheur. On n'a qu'à voir celle que le Tasse a lui-même trouvée dans sa Jérusalem.

Mais il est temps de nous occuper du Poème de l'Enfer en particulier, de son coloris, de ses beautés et de ses défauts.

Au temps où le Dante écrivoit, la Littérature se réduisoit en France, comme en Espagne, aux petites poésies des Troubadours. En Italie, on ne faisoit rien d'important dans la langue du peuple; tout s'écrivoit en latin. Mais le Dante

ayant à construire son monde idéal, et voulant peindre pour son siècle et sa nation,[1] prit ses matériaux où il les trouva: il fit parler une langue qui avoit bégayé jusqu'alors, et les mots extraordinaires qu'il créoit au besoin, n'ont servi qu'à lui seul. Voilà une des causes de son obscurité. D'ailleurs il n'est point de Poète qui tende plus de piéges à son Traducteur; c'est presque toujours des bizarreries, des énigmes ou des horreurs qu'il lui propose: il entasse les comparaisons les plus dégoûtantes, les allusions, les termes de l'école et les expressions les plus basses: rien ne lui paroît méprisable, et la langue française chaste et timorée s'effarouche à chaque phrase. Le Traducteur a sans cesse à lutter contre un style affamé de poésie, qui est riche et point délicat, et qui dans cinq ou six tirades épuise ses ressources, et lui dessèche ses palettes. Quel parti donc prendre? Celui de ménager ses couleurs; car il s'agit d'en fournir aux dessins les plus fiers qui aient été tracés de main d'homme; et lorsqu'on est pauvre et délicat, il convient d'être sobre. Il faut surtout varier ses inversions: le Dante dessine quelquefois l'attitude de ses personnages par la coupe de ses phrases; il a des brusqueries de style qui produisent de grands effets; et souvent dans la peinture de ses sup-

[1] C'est un des grands défauts du Poème, d'être fait un peu trop pour le moment: delà vient que l'Auteur ne s'attachant qu'à présenter sans cesse les nouvelles tortures qu'il invente, court toujours en avant, et ne fait qu'indiquer les aventures. C'étoit assez pour son temps; pas assez pour le nôtre.

plices il emploie une fatigue de mots qui rend merveilleusement celle des tourmentés. L'imagination passe toujours de la surprise que lui cause la description d'une chose incroyable, à l'effroi que lui donne nécessairement la vérité du tableau: il arrive de-là que ce monde visible ayant fourni au Poète assez d'images pour peindre son monde idéal, il conduit et ramène sans cesse le Lecteur de l'un à l'autre; et ce mélange d'événemens si invraisemblables et de couleurs si vraies, fait toute la magie de son Poème.

Le Dante a versifié par tercets, ou à rimes triplées; et c'est de tous les Poètes celui qui, pour mieux porter le joug, s'est permis le plus d'expressions impropres et bizarres: mais aussi quand il est beau, rien ne lui est comparable. Son vers se tient debout par la seule force du substantif et du verbe, sans le concours d'une seule épithète.[1]

Si les comparaisons et les tortures que le Dante imagine, sont quelquefois horribles, elles ont toujours un côté ingénieux, et chaque supplice est pris dans la nature du crime qu'il punit. Quant à ses idées les plus bizarres, elles offrent aussi je ne sais quoi de grand et de rare qui étonne et attache le Lecteur. Son dialogue est souvent plein de vigueur et de naturel, et tous ses person-

1 Tels sont sans duote aussi les beaux vers de Virgile et d'Homère; ils offrent à-la-fois la pensée, l'image et le sentiment: ce sont de vrais polypes, vivans dans le tout, et vivans dans chaque partie; et dans cette plénitude de poésie, il ne peut se trouver un mot qui n'ait une grande intention. Mais on n'y sent pas ce goût âpre et sauvage, cette franchise qui ne peut s'allier avec la perfection. et qui fait le caractère et le charme du Dante.

nages sont fièrement dessinés. La plupart de ses peintures ont encore aujourd'hui la force de l'antique et la fraîcheur du moderne, et peuvent être comparées à ces tableaux d'un coloris sombre et effrayant, qui sortoient des ateliers des Michel-Ange et des Carraches, et donnoient à des sujets empruntés de la Religion, une sublimité qui parloit à tous les yeux.

Il est vrai que dans cette immense galerie de supplices, on ne rencontre pas assez d'épisodes; et malgré la briéveté des Chants, qui sont comme des repos placés de très-près, le Lecteur le plus intrépide ne peut échapper à la fatigue. C'est le vice fondamental du Poème.

Enfin, du mélange de ses beautés et de ses défauts, il résulte un Poème qui ne ressemble à rien de ce qu'on a vu, et qui laisse dans l'ame une impression durable. On se demande, après l'avoir lu, comment un homme a pu trouver dans son imagination tant de supplices différens, qu'il semble avoir épuisé les ressources de la vengeance divine; comment il a pu, dans une langue naissante, les peindre avec des couleurs si chaudes et si vraies; et dans une carrière de trente-quatre Chants se tenir sans cesse la tête courbée dans les Enfers.

Au reste, ce Poème ne pouvoit paroître dans des circonstances plus malheureuses: nous sommes trop près ou trop loin de son sujet. Le Dante parloit à des esprits religieux, pour qui ses paroles

étoient des paroles de vie, et qui l'entendoient à demi-mot: mais il semble qu'aujourd'hui on ne puisse plus traiter les grands sujets mystiques d'une manière sérieuse. Si jamais, ce qu'il n'est pas permis de croire, notre théologie devenoit une langue morte, et s'il arrivoit qu'elle obtînt, comme la mythologie, les honneurs de l'antique; alors le Dante inspireroit une autre espèce d'intérêt: son Poème s'élèveroit comme un grand monument au milieu des ruines des Littératures et des Religions: il seroit plus facile à cette postérité reculée, de s'accommoder des peintures sérieuses due Poète, et de se pénétrer de la véritable terreur de son Enfer; on se feroit chrétien avec le Dante, comme on se fait payen avec Homère.[1]

NOTES SUR LE DANTE

Par Alphonse de Lamartine.

Nous allons froisser tous les fanatismes; n'importe, disons ce que nous pensons.

On peut classer le poème du Dante de l' *Enfer,* du *Purgatoire* et du *Paradis* parmi les poèmes populaires, c'est-à-dire parmi ces poésies locales, nationales, temporaires, qui émanent du génie du

1 Je serois tenté de croire que ce Poème auroit produit de l'effet sous Louis XIV., quand je vois Pascal avouer dans ce siècle, que la sévérité de Dieu envers les damnés le surprend moins que sa miséricorde envers les élus. On verra par quelques citations de cet éloquent mysanthrope, qu'il étoit bien digne de faire l'Enfer, et que peut-être celui du Dante lui eût semblé trop doux.

lieu, de la nation, du temps (*genius loci*), et qui s'adressent aux croyances, aux superstitions, aux passions infimes de la multitude. Quand le poète est aussi médiocre que son pays, son peuple et son temps, ces poésies sont entraînées dans le courant ou dans l'égout des âges avec la multitude qui les goûte; quand le poète est un grand homme d'expression, comme le Dante, le poète survit éternellement, et on essaie éternellement aussi de faire survivre le poème; mais on n'y parvient pas. L'œuvre, jadis intelligible et populaire, aujourd'hui ténébreuse et inexplicable, résiste, comme le sphinx, aux interrogations des érudits, il n'en subsiste que des fragments plus semblables à des énigmes qu'à des monuments.

Pour comprendre le Dante, il faudrait ressusciter toute la populace florentine de son époque: car ce sont ses croyances, ses haines, ses popularités et ses impopularités qu'il a chantées. Il est puni par où il a péché: il a chanté pour la place publique, la postérité ne le comprehend plus.

Tout ce qu'on peut comprendre, c'est que le poème exclusivement toscan du Dante était une espèce de satire vengeresse du poète et de l'homme d'État contre les hommes et les partis auxquels il avait voué sa haine. L'idée était mesquine et indigne du poète. Le génie n'est pas un jouet mis au service de nos petites colères; c'est un don de Dieu qu'on peut profaner en le ravalant à des petitesses. La lyre, pour nous

servir de l'expression antique, n'est pas une tenaille pour torturer nos adversaires, une claie pour traîner des cadavres aux gémonies; il faut laisser cela à faire au bourreau: ce n'est pas œuvre de poète. Le Dante eut ce tort; il crut que les siècles, infatués par ses vers, prendraient parti contre on ne sait quels rivaux ou quels ennemis inconnus qui battaient alors le pavé de Florence. Ces amitiés ou ces inimitiés d'hommes obscurs sont parfaitement indifférentes à la postérité. Elle aime mieux un beau vers, une belle image, un beau sentiment, que toute cette chronique rimée de la place du Vieux-Palais (*Palazzo-Vecchio*) à Florence.

Au lieu de faire un poème épique vaste et immortel comme la nature, le Dante a fait la gazette florentine de la postérité. C'est là le vice de l'*Enfer* du Dante. Une gazette ne vit qu'un jour; mais le style dans lequel le Dante a écrit cette gazette est impérissable. Réduisons donc ce poème bizarre à sa vraie valeur, le style, ou plutôt quelques fragments de style. Nous pensons à cet égard comme Voltaire, le prophète du bon sens: "Otez du Dante soixante ou quatre-vingts vers sublimes et véritablement séculaires, il n'y a guère que nuage, barbarie, trivialité et ténèbres dans le reste."

Nous savons bien que nous choquons, en parlant ainsi, toute une école littéraire récente qui s'acharne sur le poème du Dante sans le com-

prendre, comme les mangeurs d'opium s'acharnent à regarder le vide du firmament pour y découvrir Dieu. Mais nous avons vécu de longues années en Italie, dans la société de ces commentateurs et explicateurs du Dante, qui se succèdent de génération en génération, comme les ombres sur les hiéroglyphes des obélisques de Thèbes; nous avons vécu même de longues années à Florence, parmi les héritiers des hommes et parmi les traditions des choses chantées, vantées ou invectivées par le poète, et nous pouvons affirmer qu'aucun d'eux n'a fait que déchiffrer des choses souvent bien peu dignes d'être déchiffrées. La persévérance même de ces commentateurs est la meilleure preuve de l'impuissance du commentaire à élucider le texte. Un secret une fois trouvé ne se cherche plus avec tant d'acharnement. De jeunes Français se sont évertués maintenant à poursuivre ce qui a lassé les Toscans eux-mêmes. Que le dieu du chaos leur soit propice!

Quant à nous, nous n'avons trouvé, comme Voltaire, dans le Dante, qu'un grand inventeur de style, un grand créateur de langue égaré dans une conception de ténèbres, un immense fragment de poète dans un petit nombre de fragments de vers gravés, plutôt qu'écrits, avec le ciseau de ce Michel-Ange de la poésie; une trivialité grossière qui descend jusqu'au cynisme du mot et jusqu'à la crapule de l'image; une

quintessence de théologie scolastique qui s'élève jusqu'à la vaporisation de l'idée; enfin, pour tout dire d'un mot, un grand homme et un mauvais livre.

LA COMÉDIE DIVINE

Edgar Quinet, Les Revolutions d'Italie, Chap VII.

Comme dans chaque détail d'une cathédrale vous retrouvez le caractère de l'ensemble, de même dans chaque partie du poëme de Dante vous retrouvez en abrégé toutes les autres. Les souvenirs politiques dominent dans l'Enfer; la politique s'unit à la philosophie dans le Purgatoire, la philosophie à la théologie dans le Paradis; en sorte que dans ce long itinéraire, les bruits du monde s'évanouissent peu à peu et achèvent de se perdre dans l'extase des derniers chants. Il y a dans l'Enfer des éclairs d'une joie perdue qui rappellent et entr'ouvrent le Paradis; il y a dans le Paradis des plaintes lamentables, des prophéties de malheur comme si le firmament lui même s'abîmait dans le gouffre, et que l'extrême douleur ressaisît l'homme au sein de l'extrême joie.

Diviser par fragments le poëme de Dante, comme on le fait ordinairement, c'est le méconnaître; il faut au moins suivre une fois, tout d'une haleine, le poëte dans ces trois mondes qui se

touchent, embrasser d'un seul regard l'horizon des ténèbres et de la lumière, suivre le chemin de la torture qui mène à la félicité, recueillir tous les échos de douleur et de joie qui s'appellent sans trouver de réponse, et placé au sommet du poëme, s'orienter dans la cité du Dieu et du Démon: il faut entendre une fois le *miserere* des damnés dans les fleuves de sang, en même temps que l'hosannah des bienheureux, puisque c'est de ce mélange que se forme l'accord complet de la *Comédie divine*. Le démon couve le fond de l'abîme en même temps que l'aile des séraphins traverse les jardins de l'Éthérée. Cette infinité de joie qui confine à cette infinité de douleur, cet écho infernal qui répond à un écho emparadisé, cet abîme qui vous enveloppe dans tous les sens, cette malédiction qui répond à cette bénédiction, cet ordre dans l'incommensurable, c'est la pensée qui donne le prix à toutes les autres. A cela joignez, pour accroître la réalité de la cité de l'abîme, le cortége des souvenirs poignants que le poëte emporte avec lui, le sentiment de personnalité qui non-seulement survit, mais semble encore s'exalter dans la mort. Les hérésies avaient déjà, pour un moment, ébranlé le vieux dogme. Mais il était une chose qu'aucune secte n'avait encore mise en doute au treizième siècle: la foi dans l'immortalité et la résurrection. On croyait à cet empire des morts, au moins autant qu'à l'empire des vivants; et comme les esprits s'en

étaient beaucoup plus occupés, on le connaissait mieux que le monde visible. Les familles humaines étaient si certaines de se retrouver là, chacune avec sa langue, son accent, sa physionomie! Chez Dante, ce ne sont pas seulement les personnes, mais aussi les choses, les objets, les lieux aimés qui sont transportés dans le pays des morts. Vous retrouvez dans l'Enfer les châteaux forts, les villes, les murailles crénelées, les ponts-levis des Guelfes et des Gibelins. Chaque endroit de l'abîme est décrit avec une précision qui vous le fait toucher du doigt. La Jérusalem mystique est construite des débris de Florence. Les principaux lieux de l'Italie reparaissent assombris par le triste soleil des morts. C'est le beau lac de Garda, ce sont les lagunes de Venise, ou les digues de la Brenta, ou les flancs minés des Alpes Tarentines qui forment en partie l'horizon de la cité éternelle. Ce mélange de merveilleux et de réel vous saisit à chaque pas; c'est encore l'Italie, mais renversée, du haut des monts, au bruit de la trompe des archanges, sous les pieds du dernier juge.

Le désordre, le chaos, tous les tons qui se brisent, voilà le génie véritablement satanique. Plus la confusion est grande, plus les inventions sont effrénées, et moins vous soupçonnez l'art de les avoir arrangées pour un effet du moment. Le comble de l'art, ici, est d'être naturellement désordonné. L'antiquité grecque venant à se

rencontrer avec le moyen âge, produit une dissonance effroyable, harmonie de l'enfer. Quand l'esprit se heurte à ces anachronismes monstrueux qui enchaînent à la même pensé e, souvent à la même place, les païens et les chrétiens, mêlant indistinctement toutes les générations, joignant Pyrrhus et Attila, il semble que les différences des siècles s'effacent, et que le temps même disparaisse dans le poëme de l'éternité.

Quelles sont, au milieu de ce chaos, les relations du poëte et du poëme? L'auteur tremble devant ses propres conceptions. Pendant que les apparitions surgissent, il voudrait fermer ses yeux et ses oreilles. Vous voyez une œuvre formidable, qui s'accomplit, pour ainsi dire, d'elle-même, et l'auteur qui demande grâce à son génie. C'est en vain; l'œuvre inexorable se déroule; elle s'accroît comme une force invincible, elle entraîne avec elle le poëte. Muse assurément infernale, elle l'entoure, l'investit de toutes parts; malgré ses tremblements, ses cris étouffés, elle le précipite de tourbillons en tourbillons, de terreurs en terreurs. Les puissances de son esprit évoquées, Dante ne s'appartient plus; il a tracé autour de lui le cercle des incantations, il n'en sortira pas. Portant d'avance son châtiment, il tente de rentrer dans le monde réel; mais cela lui est impossible. Aussi suis-je tout près de le croire quand, accablé sous le poids de sa pensée, épouvanté par son œuvre,

il ma'appelle et me dit: "Lecteur, je t'assure que je l'ai vu, et mes cheveux en sont encore hérissés de peur." Comme je ne puis m'empêcher de donner ma sympathie et mon cœur à cet homme si simple qui m'appelle à son secours et tend vers moi les mains, je le suis des yeux dans les profondeurs de l'abîme où il m'attire. Penché sur le gouffre, j'éprouve avec les enchantements du vertige l'envie de me précipiter dans ces cercles et ces tourbillons qui, toujours diminuant au bruit des hymnes infernaux et des soupirs de Françoise de Rimini et d'Ugolin, m'entraînent sans défense au sein de l'Infini lui-même.

L'homme écrasé par sa propre pensée, voilà une situation que le génie antique ne connaissait pas; elle conduit à un principe tout nouveau de style. Vous avez du dans le tableau du jugement dernier de Michel-Ange, les esprits effrayés par le son de la trompette des anges et par la splendeur du Christ juge, se couvrir les yeux de leurs mains. C'est là un geste naturel au Dante. Plus sa pensée est formidable, et plus il craint de l'augmenter par ses paroles; il la cache, la retient sous une expression qui semble d'abord l'atténuer; mais la lumière maudite perce plus formidable sous ce voile. L'écho de l'enfer rugit avec plus de force sous ces paroles détournées qui semblaient d'abord faites pour l'étouffer.

Les seuls êtres qui n'effrayent pas Dante et

qui paraissent ses interlocuteurs naturels, ce sont les morts. Comme il converse familièrement avec eux! quelle intimité d'une nature toute nouvelle! Il est vrai que ce ne sont plus seulement des fantômes comme dans l'antiquité; jamais, au contraire, sous le soleil, vies ne furent plus ardentes, ni personnalités plus indestructibles! Au milieu de toutes les tortures, le doute en l'immortalité n'a jamais pénétré dans le cœur de ces damnés. Puis, une partie de ces morts sont d'hier; et cependant, qu'ils ont appris de choses dans les Elysées du Christ! ils se souviennent du passé; ils prévoient l'avenir; ils n'ignorent que le présent.

Sans doute, les supplices semblent trop matériels; mais n'oubliez pas qu'ils ne sont que le signe du supplice intérieur; ni Farinata, ni Bertrand de Born, ni Ugolin, ni Françoise de Rimini, ces figures si connues qui parlent en pleurant, ne se plaignent des blessures de leurs corps, de la tempête éternelle, du bitume brûlant, ou du lac glacé. Ils n'accusent que la blessure intérieure; et peut-être jamais l'obsession de la pensée n'a-t-elle mieux paru que dans la fierté terrible d'une partie de ces damnés qui au milieu des tortures des sens ne parlent jamais que des tortures de l'esprit. Leurs discours, leurs récits, contrastent avec les fureurs du supplice; vous croiriez qu'ils ne sont occupés que de ce qui est autour d'eux; au contraire, c'est le souvenir d'un certain jour, d'une

certaine heure éloignée dont l'enfer tout entier ne peut les distraire. Ils se repaissent éternellement de ce souvenir, en sorte que tout cet appareil de tourments matériels ne sert qu'à mieux montrer la plaie invisible de l'âme.

Quand les peintres du moyen âge ont tenté de fixer les visions de Dante sur les murailles, ils ont réussi à représenter son Paradis; ils ont été incapables de copier son Enfer. Dans les anges couronnés d'auréoles sur les fresques de Gozzoli, de Thaddeo Gaddi, rayonnent la foi, le repos, l'extase du séjour des séraphins; les lèvres bénies murmurent les tercets emparadisés de Béatrix. Mais sitôt que ces mêmes hommes veulent représenter l'Enfer, ils perdent leur génie. Le pinceau véritablement béat de Fra Angelico ne peut suivre le poëte dans le chaos de la cité maudite; il n'en exprime tout au plus qu'une ombre burlesque. Les pieuses confréries d'artistes sont incapables, au quatorzième siècle, de descendre de sang-froid dans l'abîme du mal.

Voulez-vous rencontrer un spectacle tout opposé, il faut arriver au seizième siècle, devant le *Jugement dernier* de Michel-Ange. C'est ici le règne de l'enfer; la terreur a pénétré jusque dans le paradis. Au milieu de l'horreur universelle, il semble que la tempête gronde, et que la *cité dolente* ait tout envahi. Dans cette barque maudite, chargée de damnés, que conduit un noir chérubin, je reconnais celle que Dante a rencon-

trée près du fleuve de sang. Voilà sur le rivage le serpent qui entoure de ses replis le prêtre sacrilége; voilà le Minos de la *Comédie divine.* Mais la béatitude des cieux de Fiésole, de Pérugin, qu'est-elle devenue? où est le sourire de Béatrix? où est la région de paix, l'hosannah des bienheureux? Nulle part. Que s'est il donc passé? Le moyen âge est fini; la réformation a déchiré le rideau du temple; la sérénité des anciens maîtres est perdue sans retour; le ciel de Michel-Ange est tout chargé de la tempête qui éclate sur la société moderne.

Chacune des parties du poëme de Dante correspond à une époque de sa vie et en reproduit le caractère. L'Enfer a été composé dans les années qui ont suivi immédiatement son exil. Dans chaque vers la plaie est saignante; vous entendez l'écho, les hurlements de la guerre civile. Au contraire, au moment de composer le Purgatoire, il s'éloigne de l'Italie et ses angoisses s'apaisent. Bientôt l'avénement de Henri VII. réveille chez le Gibelin des espérances exaltées; c'est alors qu'il écrit cette lettre de pacification qui tranche si vivement avec les autres: "A tous et à chaque roi d'Italie, aux sénateurs de Rome, aux ducs, aux marquis, aux comtes, à tous les peuples, l'humble Italien, Dante Alighieri de Florence, injustement exilé, envoie la paix." Puis après quelques mots:

"Console-toi, Italie, console-toi, parce que ton

époux, qui est la joie du siècle et la gloire de ton peuple, se hâte de venir à tes noces: essuie tes larmes, ô la plus belle des belles! et vous tous qui pleurez, réjouissez-vous, parce que votre salut est proche! Pardonnez, pardonnez, mes bien-aimés, vous tous qui avez souffert injustement avec moi!"

D'autres circonstances de sa vie montrent la même lassitude. Un jour, de la fenêtre d'un couvent placé sur les rochers du golfe de Spezia, un moine voit un inconnu errer autour de l'ermitage. "Que cherches-tu? lui dit-il.—*La paix,*" répond Dante, qui sortait de l'Enfer.

Imaginez que ce sentiment de douceur se communique à son poëme: vous aurez le secret le cette muse angélique qui tout à l'heure répétait les ricanements des démons; c'est dans sa situation intérieure qu'il puise des accords tout nouveaux. L'âme désespérée recommence à sourire dans le Purgatoire; les haines infernales sont remplacées par des retours vers les amitiés de la jeunesse et la *vita nuova.* L'arbre frappé de la foudre rajeunit et reverdit sous un souffle printanier; ces impressions mêlées et confordues (car l'amour n'est pas encore si puissant que l'on ne se souvienne de l'enfer), répandent dans le Purgatoire toutes les mélodies du monde moral. Les jeunes femmes qui traversent le poëme, la Pia, Gentucca, Mathilde, qui cueille des fleurs du ciel, Nella et au-dessus de toutes les autres,

Béatrix toujours présente, ramènent les visions des plus belles et des meilleures années; puis les compagnons de jeunesse, Casella le musicien, qui lui rappelle ses premiers chants d'amour, Oderisi le peintre, les troubadours Sordel, Arnault Daniel, c'est la réunion de tous ceux qui ont accompagné les jours sereins et radieux. Les vers trempés dans le gouffre de bitume au souffle des démons, s'amollissent au regard de Béatrix; l'âme était montée au ton de la terreur; par une transition inattendue, cette terreur aboutit à la plénitude de l'espérance, comme ces mélodies qui, commençant par un soupir de détresse, s'achèvent et se relèvent dans un accent de joie céleste.

Le dirai-je? Le Paradis de Dante me paraît incomparablement plus triste que son Purgatoire? Il le composa dans les dernières années de sa vie. Les espérances par lesquelles il s'était laissé reprendre venaient de tomber devant la réalité. Les empereurs n'avaient rien fait de ce que le Gibelin avait attendu. Aussi, dans le Paradis, il est visible que le cœur de Dante ne regrette plus rien de la terre. Les partis, les individus s'évanouissent pour lui; ils l'ont trop souvent abusé! L'Italie elle-même achève de disparaître: une seule fois il la rappelle, en rencontrant son aïeul Cacciaguida; et c'est pour enfoncer lui-même à jamais dans son cœur ce qu'il appelle le trait de l'exil; en sorte que le Paradis le frappe du dernier coup que lui avait épargné l'Enfer.

Que lui ont fait ces figures charmantes qu'il avait rencontrées ici-bas? Pourquoi ne veut-il pas s'en environner dans le ciel? Pourquoi ne revoit-on pas ses jeunes amis, Guido Cavalcanti, Lappo, avec lesquels il souhaitait d'abord de navigner sur un vaisseau éternel? Pour quoi ne les suit-on pas avec lui dans la barque des anges, au milieu de l'océan céleste? Pourquoi se fait-il un ciel désert dans lequel personne, excepté Béatrix, ne lui rappelle la vie réelle? On dirait (et cela n'est point impossible) que cette partie a été com posée dans le silence du monastère de Gubbio où Dante s'est en effet retiré. Je retrouve en cet endroit du poëme la paix de ces ermitages des Camaldules, sur les sommets des Apennins où ne monte aucun bruit de la terre; l'homme a peine à y respirer et y vivre. Les figures des saints représentés sur les fresques de ces ermitages semblent en être les hôtes éternels. De même les seuls habitants du Paradis de Dante sont quelques anachorètes perdus dans l'immensité; çà et là un païen, par une dernière ironie, jetée sur l'Italie chrétienne; mais, du reste, personne qu'il ait connu ou qu'il ait aimé sur terre. Du plus haut du ciel, le vieux Gibelin laisse tomber son arrêt de proscription contre tout le monde visible qui l'a trompé, et contre cette patrie même qu'il n'a pu se donner.

Après avoir achevé l'Enfer, Dante avait fait un voyage en France et passé près de deux ans

à Paris. La trace de ce voyage est facile à reconnaître dans le poëte. Attiré par le bruit des écoles qui n'avaient cessé de retentir depuis Abeilard, il était venu à ce rendez-vous que les philosophes se donnaient alors sur la montagne de Sainte-Geneviève; il ne retrouvait plus pour maître ses compatriotes saint Thomas, saint Bonaventure; mais leur tradition subsistait, et leur enseignement était encore tout vivant.

Du combat de Campaldino aux pugilats de paroles de la scolastique, quel changement! Comment une imagination nourrie des colères des partis s'inspirera-t-elle de ces débats où l'esprit humain se tend incessamment des piéges à lui-même? Je doute que Dante se soit asservi à aucun système; je vois, au contraire, qu'il s'enivre à toutes les sources à la fois: Aristote, saint Thomas, Albert le Grand. Quand Goethe peint l'exaltation de Faust, le savant du moyen âge, au milieu du désordre de ses instruments d'alchimie, de ses livres de philosophie, de théologie, il explique sans y penser, mieux que tous les commentaires, l'auteur de la *Comédie divine*.

Dante et Faust marquent en effet les deux âges opposés de la science humaine, et ils se rencontrent à ces extrémités. Dante, c'est l'adolescence de l'esprit humain; comme il n'a jamais éprouvé l'impuissance du savoir de l'homme, il a pour la philosophie la même adoration que pour la religion; il est convaincu que l'or pur de la

vérité est au fond de son creuset, qu'il possède dans un livre les secrets de l'univers, que le syllogisme de Sigier lui ouvrira les portes de tous les mystères. Science naïve, il s'en abreuve comme du lait maternel, et croit goûter la sagesse de Dieu. Faust, au contraire, tel que Goethe l'a montré, c'est l'esprit humain dans sa vieillesse; plus il sait, plus il doute: à mesure qu'il apprend, il s'éloigne du terme; las de penser, il voudrait pouvoir oublier. Surtout ces contradictions se montrent à découvert dans la manière différente de sentir et de concevoir l'amour. La femme que Dante place au-dessus de toutes les autres, personnifie pour lui le savoir et la philosophie. Quelle est, au contraire, la Béatrix de Faust rassasié de science? qui lui représente la félicité? Une jeune fille qui ne sait rien, Marguerite, un enfant du peuple, l'image de la suprême, de la céleste ignorance.

Voilà la clef qui achève d'ouvrir le mystère. L'auteur de l'Enfer vient d'entrevoir dans le commerce des philosophes le royaume des idées; il veut les transporter toutes vivantes dans son œuvre, comme il a fait des partis politiques. Sans obéir à un maître, à une école particulière, il s'attache à l'esprit de la scolastique qui attribue à chaque chose un double sens, le littéral et le spirituel. On n'a rien dit lorsque, pour expliquer la puissance de Dante, on parle de la beauté de quelques épisodes ou de l'emportement des passions

politiques; car son poëme, écrit au point de vue d'un parti, aurait été rejeté par tous les autres. Pourquoi donc les a-t-il tous également séduits? parce qu'il renfermait l'âme même du moyen âge et qu'il répondait à ce désir unanime de saisir un sens caché sous les formes de la nature et de l'art. Cet idéalisme, qui trouve à peine place dans l'Enfer, va toujours croissant avec le règne de l'esprit dans le Purgatoire et le Paradis; outre que la langue, de cercle en cercle, s'illumine davantage; car une flamme intérieure éclaire la parole. Attiré par ces clartés de l'âme, le moyen âge savait qu'un trésor devait être enfoui à chaque endroit, et il interprétait le poëme comme un apocalypse de la société laïque. Chacun voulait y découvrir une face nouvelle du monde moral.

Aussi longtemps que la *Comédie divine* a été lue dans l'esprit qui l'a inspirée, la tradition de ce sens caché a été pieusement gardée par les commentateurs. Depuis Benvenuto d'Imola jusqu'à Landini, ils sont unanimes à cet égard. Boccace, lui-même, si amoureux du monde extérieur, se plonge dans ces abîmes; c'est lui qui déclare que la *Comédie divine* enveloppe *la pensée catholique tout entière sous l'écorce vulgaire de la parole.* D'après cette tradition, la forêt solitaire dans laquelle Dante s'égare, c'est le chemin de la vie contemplative; sainte Lucie qui s'éveille pour le sauver, c'est la divine clémence; le fleuve

ténébreux de l'Enfer, c'est le fleuve de la vie humaine qui roule de noirs soucis; les animaux monstrueux et hurlants sont les passions des sens. Le passage de l'Enfer au Purgatoire a pour gardien Caton d'Utique. Pourquoi ce personnage? Quel caprice! Cette fantaisie change de nom si l'on admet la tradition des vieux commentateurs; suivant eux, nul ne pouvant sortir du royaume du mal sans un effort héroïque de liberté, Caton d'Utique, qui s'est déchiré de ses mains pour échapper à la servitude, est l'éternel représentant du libre arbitre sur les confins du bien et du mal. Ailleurs, l'aigle qui enlève le poëte au ciel, c'est la foi aux ailes étendues; les trois degrés de la porte du purgatoire sont les trois degrés du sacrement de pénitence.

Qu'est-ce donc que la *Comédie divine?* l'Odyssée du chrétien; un voyage dans l'infini, mêlé d'angoisses et de chants de sirènes; un itinéraire de l'homme vers Dieu. Au commencement, l'homme réduit à ses seules forces, égaré au milieu de la forêt des sens, tombe de chute en chute, de cercle en cercle dans l'abîme des réprouvés. Par la douleur il se répare, il se relève, il gravit les degrés du purgatoire, amère vallée d'expiation. Purifié par un nouveau baptême, il monte, il atteint les gloires, les hiérarchies célestes; et par delà les bienheureux eux-mêmes, il entre jusque dans le sein de Dieu où le poëme et la vérité s'achèvent. A chacun de ces degrés se

trouve un guide particulier. Dans les cercles inférieurs où l'homme se débat avec lui-même, le conducteur est Virgile, qui représente la raison humaine, livrée à ses seules forces; avec Virgile, l'esprit païen se retire, et une âme nouvelle se communique à toutes choses. Plus haut, là où commence la grâce illuminante, surgit Béatrix, l'amour couronné du souvenir. Les anachorètes, saint Benoît, saint Bernard, que l'on rencontre de sphère en sphère, d'astre en astre, ont chacun autour de soi un monde pour ermitage; ils forment à travers l'infini une procession au-devant de Dieu. Les conversations de ces pèlerins de l'immensité marquent les stations de l'univers. Enfin au terme de l'éternel voyage, le Christ est le seul compagnon.

Tel est l'esprit dans lequel le moyen âge lisait son poëte. Il y a entre les vieux commentateurs une émulation de plonger plus avant dans le mystère; quelquefois la curiosité de l'âme leur arrache des paroles d'inspirés: "Quand j'ouvre mes yeux à cette doctrine cachée de Dante, dit Landini, une horreur soudaine me saisit; je deviens tel qu'un oiseau de nuit surpris par la lumière."

Après la renaissance du seizième siècle, on perdit peu à peu la trace de ce génie intérieur. L'épopée du moyen âge frappa le dix-huitième siècle par un côté qui n'avait pas été vu encore, par les dehors, les peintures physiques, l'har-

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monie des mots, semblable à un astre qui, dans sa lente rotation, montrerait à des siècles différents des faces opposées.

Ce qui est de tous les temps, de tous les lieux, c'est l'union de Béatrix et de Dante par delà les siècles. Béatrix n'apparaît qu'au milieu du grand voyage. Lorsque vous commencez à vous égarer dans l'immensité, la jeune fille de Florence descend du haut des cieux; elle est voilée et elle sourit. Les séraphins jettent au-devant d'elle un nuage de fleurs. Ses souvenirs de la vallée de l'Arno, ses reproches, la contenance tremblante du poëte, tout atteste la réalité; les mystères des mondes sont dévoilés comme la conversation de deux amants. C'est le dialogue de Roméo et de Juliette au bord de l'infini dans l'aurore éternelle.

Dante achève de boire dans le fleuve Eunoë l'oubli du monde antique: il attache ses yeux sur Béatrix, Béatrix sur les hauteurs du ciel; et tous deux ravis, de région en région pénètrent jusqu'au milieu des chœurs des saints et des archanges. A mesure qu'ils s'élèvent, Béatrix tient moins de l'humanité. La fille de Portinari se confond par degrés avec la vierge des cathédrales. Cette apothéose, que le jeune Dante avait rêvée sur un tombeau, se consomme en même temps que le culte de la vierge envahissait le catholicisme. Absente de la société païenne, la femme se révèle en ouvrant les cieux nou-

veaux; l'amour chrétien la déifie. La Madone de Bethléem était devenue l'âme de l'Église, Béatrix devient l'âme du poëme.

Malgré une alliance si intime avec les sentiments populaires, qui croirait que l'Homère italien a si faiblement agi sur l'éducation de l'Italie? il n'a pu raviver, transformer la religion nationale; il a trouvé dans l'immutabilité du culte un obstacle invincible à la *vie nouvelle* qu'il portait en lui-même et voulait propager. C'est-à-dire que son influence a été immense sur les individus, et nulle sur la société; il a élevé des hommes, non un peuple; il a remué des personnes, il n'a pu ébranler une nation.

Mais dans ces limites, où est l'Italien qui ne lui ait emprunté quelque chose? De ces grands individus, qui çà et là tiennent la place d'un peuple, quel est celui qui ne lui doive une partie de sa grandeur? Raphaël et Michel-Ange vivent de la vie nouvelle dans leurs peintures, Machiavel dans sa politique, Vico dans sa philosophie. Toutes les âmes, exténuées par de trop grandes épreuves, se retrempent dans cette âme invulnérable. L'Italie ne l'oublie que lorsqu'elle s'oublie elle-même: toutes les fois qu'elle se réveille, elle trouve à son chevet les pages de Dante. Pendant le moyen âge, elle tient le volume ouvert et le commente comme un codicille du Nouveau Testament; quand le despotisme l'écrase, elle abandonne les pages sibyllines, parce qu'elle

abandonne l'espoir. Mais alors le livre est emporté par les exilés, les proscrits, par tous ceux qui vont errant de lieux en lieux, pour ne pas voir la face de l'étranger sur le sol de leur pays. Le pamphlet du quatorzième siècle est entre leurs mains une conspiration permanente pour la liberté, l'indépendance d'une patrie perdue: ils y retrouvent leurs larmes et leurs pensées d'aujourd'hui. L'obscurité même du texte les protége; car ils cherchent à y épier l'aurore du lendemain; quelquefois, passant comme Dante des tourments de l'enfer aux félicités du ciel, ils voient soudainement l'Italie renaître sous la figure de cette Béatrix radieuse qui cache, disent-ils, dans les *plis verts* de sa robe, les *vertes* vallées des Apennins et de la Calabre.

LA PHILOSOPHIE ITALIENNE

Ozanam, Dante et la Philosophie Catholique au Treizième Siècle, Partie I. ch. III.

I. Trois choses inséparables, le vrai, le bien et le beau, sollicitent l'âme de l'homme à la fois par le sentiment de leur absence actuelle et par l'espoir d'un rapprochement possible. Le désir du bien fut la première préoccupation des premiers sages, et la philosophie à son origine, ainsi que son nom le témoigne (Φιλοσοφία), fut l'œuvre de l'amour. Mais, le bien ne pouvant se faire sans

être d'abord perçu comme vrai, la pratique incertaine appela le secours de la spéculation: il fallut étudier les êtres pour déterminer les lois qui les unissent. On ne pouvait approcher du vrai sans être frappé de sa splendeur, qui est le beau; l'harmonie des êtres, se réfléchissant dans les conceptions des savants, devait se reproduire jusque dans leurs discours. La philosophie des premiers temps fut donc morale dans sa direction et poétique dans sa forme.

Telle au sein de l'école pythagoricienne elle apparut pour la première fois en Italie. Alors les villes lui demandèrent des lois, et plus tard les métaphysiciens d'Élée et Empédocle d'Agrigente chantèrent les mystères de la nature dans la langue des dieux.—Puis Rome fut, et, comme son nom l'annonçait (Ῥώμη), Rome fut la force; et cette force, mise en action, devint l'empire du monde. Le peuple romain devait donc être doué surtout du génie de l'action. Cependant le sentiment de l'art ne lui manquait pas non plus; il fallait d'harmonieuses paroles à sa tribune, des chants à ses triomphes. Lors donc qu'il accueillit la philosophie, c'est qu'elle se présenta sous les auspices de Scipion et d'Ennius, s'engageant ainsi à servir et à plaire; et depuis elle ne cessa pas de se prévaloir du patronage commun des hommes d'État et des poëtes. Elle visitait la retraite de Cicéron, accompagnait Sénèque dans l'exil, mourait avec Thraséas, dictait à Tacite, régnait

avec Marc-Aurèle, et s'asseyait dans l'école des jurisconsultes, qui ramenaient toute la science des choses divines et humaines à la détermination du bien et du mal. Elle avait convié à ses leçons Lucrèce, Virgile, Horace, Ovide et Lucain. Les systèmes de Zénon et d'Épicure, prompts à se résoudre en conséquences morales, les traditions de Pythagore empreintes d'une ineffaçable beauté, obtinrent seuls le droit de cité romaine.— Le Christianisme vint féconder de nouveau le sol italien que tant d'illustres enfantements semblaient devoir épuiser. Après Panthénus, l'abeille de Sicile et le premier fondateur de l'école chrétienne d'Alexandrie; après Lactance et saint Ambroise, le génie des anciens Romains revécut au sixième et au septième siècle dans deux de leurs plus nobles descendants, Boëce et saint Grégoire. L'un, martyr du courage civil, sut prêter à la philosophie un langage harmonieux et consolateur; l'autre, infatigable pontife, laissa pour monuments dans l'histoire de l'esprit humain ses livres admirables sur les divines Écritures et le système de chant demeuré sous son nom.—Aux derniers temps, le soleil italien ne cessa pas de luire sur des générations de philosophes, moralistes, jurisconsultes, publicistes, et de poëtes qui se firent honneur de philosopher. C'est Marsile Ficin, confondant en son enthousiasme néoplatonique la science, l'art et la vertu; c'est Machiavel, qu'il suffit de nom-

mer; Vico et Gravina, traçant les lois fondamentales de la société, l'un avec d'hiéroglyphiques symboles, l'autre avec la même plume qui écrira plus tard les statuts de l'académie des Arcades; c'est aussi Pétrarque, descendant couronné du Capitole pour aller méditer à la clarté de sa lampe solitaire "les remèdes de l'une et de l'autre fortune"; Tasse se reposant des combats de la Jérusalem délivrée dans d'admirables dialogues; et, s'il est permis de citer des célébrités plus récentes et non moins chères, Manzoni et Pellico.

On peut donc reconnaître parmi les philosophes d'outre-monts un double caractère, antique, permanent et pour ainsi dire national; car la permanence des habitudes, qui fait la personnalité chez les individus, constitue aussi la nationalité parmi les populations. On peut dire qu'il existe une philosophie italienne qui a su maintenir dans leur primitive alliance la direction morale et la forme poétique; soit que sur cette terre bénie du ciel, en présence d'une nature si active, l'homme aussi apporte dans l'action plus de vivacité et plus de bonheur, soit qu'un dessein d'en haut ait ainsi fait l'Italie pour être le siége principal du catholicisme, en qui devaient se rencontrer une philosophie excellemment pratique et poétique, les idées réunies et réalisées du vrai, du bien et du beau.

II. Au moyen âge, la philosophie italienne n'était ni moins florissante ni moins fidèle à son double caractère. A la fin des siècles barbares,

le B. Lefranc et saint Anselme, sortis de Pavie et d'Aoste pour aller prendre possession l'un après l'autre du siége primatial de Cantorbéry, inaugurèrent dans l'Europe septentrionale les études régénérées. Le Lombard Pierre fut porté par l'admiration universelle, de sa chaire de professeur, à l'évêché de Paris. Pendant que Jean Italus faisait honorer son nom dans l'école de Constantinople, Gérard de Crémone, fixé à Tolède, interrogeait la science des Arabes, et apprenait aux Espagnols à s'enrichir des dépouilles scientifiques de leurs ennemis. Bologne avait été le siége d'un enseignement philosophique qui ne manqua pas d'éclat, avant de voir commencer ces leçons de jurisprudence qui la rendirent si célèbre. La logique et la physique ne cessèrent point d'y être assidûment professées au treizième siècle. Padoue n'avait rien à envier à sa rivale. Milan comptait près de deux cents maîtres de grammaire, de logique, de médecine et de philosophie. Enfin, la renommée des penseurs de la Péninsule était si grande dans toutes les provinces du continent, qu'elle servait à expliquer l'origine des doctrines nouvellement apparues, et qu'Arnaud de Villeneuve, par exemple, passait pour l'adepte d'une secte pythagoricienne disséminée dans les principales villes de la Pouille et de la Toscane.—Mais la vigueur exubérante de la philosophie italienne ne manifeste surtout dans la mémorable lutte qui s'engagea, et qui, analogue

à celle du sacerdoce et de l'empire, continua pendant plus de deux cents ans entre les systèmes orthodoxes et les systèmes hostiles. Il y aurait peut-être le sujet d'intéressantes recherches à faire dans les doctrines des Fratricelles, de Guillemine de Milan, des Frères Spirituels, où la communauté absolue de corps et de biens, l'émancipation religieuse des femmes, la prédication d'un évangile éternel, rappelleraient les tentatives modernes du saint-simonisme. Mais, en se restreignant aux faits purement philosophiques, on en rencontre de plus surprenants encore. Dès l'année 1115, les épicuriens étaient assez nombreux à Florence pour y former une faction redoutée et pour provoquer des querelles sanglantes; plus tard, le matérialisme y apparaissait comme la doctrine publique des Gibelins. Les petits-fils d'Averrhoës furent accueillis à la cour italienne des Hohenstaufen en même temps qu'une colonie sarrasine était fondée à Nocera et faisait trembler Rome. Frédéric II. ralliait autour de lui toutes les opinions perverses, et semblait vouloir constituer une école antagoniste de l'enseignement catholique. Cette école, quelque temps reduite au silence après la chute de la dynastie qui l'avait protégée, reprit des forces lorsqu'un autre empereur, Louis de Bavière, descendit des Alpes pour aller recevoir la couronne des mains d'un antipape. Un peu plus tard Pétrarque, en citant dans ses discours

saint Paul et saint Augustin, excitait un sourire dédaigneux sur les lèvres des savants qui l'entouraient, adorateurs d'Aristote et des commentateurs arabes. Ces doctrines irréligieuses étaient pressées de se réduire en voluptés savantes: elles eurent des poëtes pour les chanter.—La vérité toutefois ne demeura point sans défenseurs, pour elle furent suscités deux hommes que nous avons déjà rencontrés parmi les plus grands de leur âge, saint Thomas d'Aquin et saint Bonaventure, qu'il faut rappeler ici comme deux gloires italiennes. Moralistes profonds, ils furent encore poétiquement inspirés, l'un quand il composa les hymnes qui devaient un jour désespérer Santeuil; l'autre, lorsqu'il écrivit le cantique traduit par Corneille. Ægidius Colonna combattit aussi l'averrhoïsme de cette même plume qui traçait des leçons aux rois. Albertano de Brescia publia trois traités d'éthique en langue vulgaire. On en pourrait citer d'autres encore qui furent vantés à leur époque, et qui ont éprouvé ce qu'il y a de trompeur dans les applaudissements des hommes.

Mais de toutes les cités assises au pied de l'Apennin, aucune ne put s'enorgueillir d'une plus heureuse fécondité que la belle Florence. Déchirée par les guerres intestines, si elle enfantait dans la douleur, elle se donnait des enfants immortels. Sans compter Lapo Fiorentino, qui professa la philosophie à Bologne, et Sandro de

Pipozzo, auteur d'un traité d'économie dont le succès fut populaire, elle avait vu naître Brunetto Latini et Guido Cavalcanti. Brunetto, notaire de la république, avait su, sans faillir à ses patriotiques fonctions, servir utilement la science: il avait traduit en italien la Morale d'Aristote; il rédigea, sous le titre de *Trésor,* une encyclopédie des connaissances de son temps, et donna dans son *Tesoretto* l'exemple d'une poésie didactique où ne manquait ni la justesse de la pensée ni la grâce de l'expression. Guido Cavalcanti fut salué le prince de la Lyre: un chant qu'il composa sur l'amour obtint les honneurs de plusieurs commentaires auxquels les théologiens les plus vénérés ne dédaignèrent pas de mettre la main. Il aurait été admiré comme philosophe si son orthodoxie fût demeurée irréprochable. C'était assez de deux citoyens de ce mérite pour honorer une ville déjà fameuse: un troisième pourtant était proche, qui les allait faire oublier.

III. La philosophie du treizième siècle devait donc demander à l'Italie le poëte dont elle avait besoin; mais l'Italie devait le donner marqué de l'empreinte nationale, pourvu avec une égale libéralité des facultés contemplatives et des facultés actives, non moins éminemment doué de l'instinct moral que du sentiment littéraire. Il fallait trouver quelque part une âme en qui ces dispositions réunies par la nature fussent développées encore par les épreuves d'une vie providentielle-

ment prédestinée, et qui, fidèle aux impressions venues du dehors, eût toutefois l'énergie nécessaire pour les rassembler et produire à son tour.

LA DIVINE COMÉDIE

Lamennais, Introduction sur la Vie et les Œuvres de Dante.

Quoi qu'il en soit, le poëme entier, sous ses nombreux aspects, politique, historique, philosophique, théologique, offre le tableau complet d'une époque, des doctrines reçues, de la science vraie ou erronée, du mouvement de l'esprit, des passions, des mœurs, de la vie enfin dans tous les ordres, et c'est avec raison qu'à ce point de vue la *Divina Commedia* a été appelée un poëme *encyclopédique*. Rien, chez les anciens comme chez les modernes, ne saurait y être comparé. En quoi rappelle-t-elle l'épopée antique, qui, dans un sujet purement national, n'est que la poésie de l'histoire, soit qu'elle raconte avec Homère les légendes héroïques de la Grèce, soit qu'avec Virgile elle célèbre les lointaines origines de Rome liées aux destins d'Énée? D'une ordre différent et plus général, le *Paradis perdu* n'offre lui-même que le développement d'un fait, pour ainsi parler, dogmatique: la création de l'homme, poussé à sa perte par l'envie de Satan, sa désobéissance, la punition qui la suit de près, l'exil de l'Éden, les maux qui, sur une terre mau-

dite, seront désormais son partage et celui de ses descendants, et, pour consoler tant de misère, la promesse d'une rédemption future. Qu'ont de commun ces poëmes, circonscrits en un sujet spécial, avec le poëme immense qui embrasse non-seulement les divers états de l'homme avant et après la chute, mais encore, par l'influx divin qui de cieux en cieux descend jusqu'à lui, l'évolution de ses facultés, de ses énergies de tous genres, ses lois individuelles et ses lois sociales, ses passions variées, ses vertus, ses vices, ses joies, ses douleurs; et non-seulement l'homme dans la plénitude de sa propre nature, mais l'univers, mais la création et spirituelle et matérielle, mais l'œuvre entière de la Toute-Puissance, de la Sagesse suprême et de l'Éternel Amour?

Dans cette vaste conception, Dante toutefois ne pouvait dépasser les limites où son siècle était enfermé. Son épopée est tout un monde, mais un monde correspondant au développement de la pensée et de la société en un point du temps et sur un point de la terre, le monde du Moyen âge. Si le sujet est universel, l'imperfection de la connaissance le ramène en une sphère aussi bornée que l'était, comparée à la science postérieure, celle qu'enveloppaient dans son étroit berceau les langes de l'École. En religion, en philosophie, l'autorité traçait autour de l'esprit un cercle infranchissable. Des origines du genre humain, de son état primordial, des premières idées qu'il

se fit des choses, des premiers sentiments qu'elles éveillèrent en lui, des antiques civilisations, des religions primitives, que savait-on? Rien. L'Asie presque entière, ses doctrines, ses arts, ses langues, ses monuments, n'étaient pas moins ignorés que la vieille Égypte, que les peuples du nord et de l'est de l'Europe, leurs idiomes, leurs mœurs, leurs croyances, leurs lois. On ne soupçonnait même pas l'existence de la moitié du globe habité. Le cercle embrassé par la vue déterminait l'étendue des cieux. La véritable astronomie, la physique, la chimie, l'anatomie, l'organogénie étaient à naître: il faut donc se reporter à l'époque de Dante pour comprendre la grandeur et la magnificence de son œuvre.

Nous avons expliqué les causes des obscurités qui s'y rencontrent, causes diverses auxquelles on pourrait ajouter encore les subtilités d'une métaphysique avec laquelle très-peu de lecteurs sont aujourd'hui familiarisés, et dont la langue même, pour être entendue, exige une étude spéciale et aride. Mais, en laissant à part le côté obscur, il reste ce qui appartient à la nature humaine dans tous les temps et dans tous les lieux, l'éternel domaine du poëte, et c'est là qu'on retrouve Dante tout entier, là qu'il prend sa place parmi ces hauts génies dont la gloire est celle de l'humanité même. Aucun n'est plus soi, aucun n'est doué d'une originalité plus puissante, aucun ne posséda jamais plus de force et de variété d'invention,

aucun ne pénétra plus avant dans les secrets replis de l'âme et dans les abîmes du cœur, n'observa mieux et ne peignit avec plus de vérité la nature, ne fut à la fois plus riche et plus concis. Si l'on peut lui reprocher des métaphores moins hardies qu'étranges, des bizarreries que réprouve le goût, presque toujours, comme nous l'avons dit, elles proviennent des efforts qu'il fait pour cacher un sens sous un autre sens, pour éveiller par un seul mot des idées différentes et parfois disparates. Ces fautes contre le goût, qui ne se forme qu'après une longue culture chez les peuples dont la langue est fixée, sont d'ailleurs communes à tous les poëtes par qui commence une ère nouvelle. Ce sont, dans les œuvres de génie, les taches dont parle Horace,—

> "Ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
> Offendar maculis."

Elles ressemblent à l'ombre de ces nuages légers qui passent sur des campagnes splendides.

Lorsque après l'hiver de la barbarie le printemps renaît, qu'aux rayons du soleil interne qui éclaire et réchauffe, et ranime les âmes engourdies dans de froides ombres, la poésie refleurit, ses premières fleurs ont un éclat et un parfum qu'on ne retrouve plus en celles qui s'épanouissent ensuite. Les productions de l'art, moins dépendantes de l'imitation et des règles convenues, offrent quelque chose de plus personnel, une

originalité plus marquée, plus puissante. Dante en est un exemple frappant. Doublement créateur, il crée tout à la fois un poëme sans modèle et une langue magnifique dont il a gardé le secret; car, quelle qu'en ait été l'influence sur le développement de la langue littéraire de l'Italie, elle a néanmoins conservé un caractère à part, qui la lui rend exclusivement propre. La netteté et la précision, je ne sais quoi de bref et de pittoresque, la distinguent particulièrement. Elle reflète, en quelque façon, le génie de Dante, nerveux, concis, ennemi de la phrase, abrégeant tout, faisant passer de son esprit dans les autres esprits, de son âme dans les autres âmes, idées, sentiments, images, par une sorte de directe communication presque indépendante des paroles.

Né dans une société toute formée, et artificiellement formée, il n'a ni le genre de simplicité, ni la naïveté des poëtes des premiers âges, mais, au contraire, quelque chose de combiné, de travaillé, et cependant, sous ce travail, un fond de naturel qui brille à travers ses singularités même. C'est qu'il ne cherche point l'effet, lequel naît de soi-même par l'expression vraie de ce que le Poëte a pensé, senti. Jamais rien de vague: ce qu'il peint, il le voit, et son style plein de relief est moins encore de la peinture que de la plastique.

Lorsque parut son œuvre, ce fut parmi ses contemporains un cri unanime d'étonnement et d'admiration. Puis des siècles se passent, dur-

ant lesquels peu à peu s'obscurcit cette grande renommée. Le sens du poëme était perdu, le goût rétréci et dépravé par l'influence d'une littérature non moins vide que factice. Au milieu du dixhuitième siècle, Voltaire écrivait à Bettinelli: "Je fais grand cas du courage avec lequel vous avez osé dire que le Dante était un fou, et son ouvrage un monstre. J'aime encore mieux pourtant, dans ce monstre, une cinquantaine de vers supérieurs à son siècle, que tous les vermisseaux appelés *sonetti,* qui naissent et qui meurent à milliers aujourd'hui dans l'Italie, de Milan jusqu'à Otrante."

Voltaire, qui ne savait guère mieux l'italien que le grec, a jugé Dante comme il a jugé Homère, sans les entendre et sans les connaître. Il n'eut, d'ailleurs, jamais le sentiment ni de la haute antiquité, ni de tout ce qui sortait du cercle dans lequel les modernes avaient renfermé l'art. Avec un goût délicat et sûr, il discernait certaines beautés. D'autres lui échappaient. La nature l'avait doué d'une vue nette, mais cette vue n'embrassait qu'un horizon borné.

L'enthousiasme pour Dante s'est renouvelé depuis, et comme un excès engendre un autre excès, on a voulu tout justifier, tout admirer dans son œuvre, faire de lui, non-seulement un des plus grands génies qui aient honoré l'humanité, mais encore un poëte sans défauts, infaillible, inspiré, un prophète. Ce n'est pas là servir sa gloire, c'est

fournir des armes à ceux qui seraient tentés de la rabaisser.

Un des reproches qu'on a faits à son poëme est l'ennui, dit-on, qu'on éprouve à le lire. Ce reproche, qu'au reste on adresse également aux anciens, n'est pas de tout point injuste. Mais, pour en apprécier la valeur véritable, il faut distinguer les époques. Ce qui ennuie aujourd'hui, les détails d'une science fausse, les subtiles argumentations sur les doctrines théologiques et philosophiques de l'École, rendent, sans aucun doute, cette partie du poëme fatigante et fastidieuse même. Mais elle était loin de produire le même effet au quatorzième siècle. Cette science était la science du temps, ces doctrines, fortement empreintes dans les esprits et dans la conscience, formaient l'élément principal de la vie de la société, et gouvernaient le monde. Voilà ce qu'il faudrait ne point oublier. Lucrèce en est-il moins un grand poëte, parce qu'il a rempli son poëme des arides doctrines d'une philosophie maintenant morte? Et cette philosophie, dans Lucrèce, c'est tout le poëme; tandis que celle de Dante et sa théologie, n'occupent, dans le sien, qu'une place incomparablement plus restreinte. Qui ne sait pas se transporter dans des sphères d'idées, de croyances, de mœurs, différentes de celles où le hasard l'a fait naître, ne vit que d'une vie imparfaite, perdue dans l'océan de la vie progressive, multiple, immense, de l'humanité.

Dante, au reste, a conçu son poëme comme ont été conçues toutes les épopées, et spécialement les plus anciennes. Celles de l'Inde, si riches en beautés de tout genre, ne sont-elles pas, au fond, des poëmes théologiques? Que serait l'*Iliade,* si l'on en retranchait les dieux partout mêlés à la contexture de la fable? Seulement la Grèce, au temps d'Homère, avait déjà rompu les liens qui entravaient le libre essor de l'esprit. Sa religion, dépourvue de dogmes abstraits, ne commandait aucunes croyances, et, dans son culte vaguement symbolique, ne parlait guère qu'aux sens et à l'imagination. Il en fut de même chez les Romains, à cet égard fils de la Grèce. Avec le christianisme, un changement profond s'opéra dans l'état religieux. La foi en des dogmes précis devint le fondement principal de la religion nouvelle: d'où l'importance que Dante, poëte chrétien, dut attacher à ces dogmes rigoureux, à cette foi nécessaire. Aujourd'hui que les esprits, entrevoyant d'autres conceptions obscures encore, mais vers lesquelles un secret instinct les attire, se détachent d'un système qu'a usé le progrès de la pensée et de la science, il a cessé d'avoir pour eux l'intérêt qu'il avait pour les générations antérieures. Mais, quelles que puissent être les doctrines destinées à le remplacer, elles seront, durant la période qu'elles caractériseront à leur tour, la source élevée de la poésie,

dont la vie est la vie de l'esprit, et qui meurt sitôt qu'elle s'absorbe dans le monde matériel.

DANTE, IMITATEUR ET CREÂTEUR

Labitte, La Divine Comédie avant Dante.

On ne dispute plus à Dante le rôle inattendu de conquérant intellectuel que son génie a su se créer tout à coup au milieu de la barbarie des temps. L'auteur de *la Divine Comédie* n'est pas pour rien le représentant poétique du moyen âge. Placé comme au carrefour de cette ère étrange, toutes les routes mènent à lui, et sans cesse on le retrouve à l'horizon. Société, intelligence, religion, tout se reflète en lui. En philosophie, il complète saint Thomas; en histoire, il est le commentaire vivant de Villani: le secret des sentiments et des tristesses d'alors se lit dans son poëme. C'est un homme complet, à la manière des écrivains de l'antiquité: il tient l'épée d'une main, la plume de l'autre; il est savant, il est diplomate, il est grand poëte. Son œuvre est un des plus vastes monuments de l'esprit humain; sa vie est un combat: rien n'y manque, les larmes, la faim, l'exil, l'amour, les gloires, les faiblesses. Et remarquez que les intervalles de son inspiration, que la sauvage dureté de son caractère, que l'aristocratie hautaine de son génie, sont des traits

de plus qui le rattachent à son époque, et qui en même temps l'en séparent et l'isolent. Où que vous portiez vos pas dans les landes ingrates du moyen âge, cette figure, à la fois sombre et lumineuse, apparaît à vos côtés comme un guide inévitable.

On est donc amené naturellement à se demander ce qu'est Dante, ce qu'est cette intelligence égarée et solitaire, sans lien presque, sans cohésion avec l'art grossier de son âge? d'où vient cette intervention subite du génie, cette dictature inattendue? Comment l'œuvre d'Alighieri surgit-elle tout à coup dans les ténèbres de l'histoire, *prolem sine matre creatam?* Est-ce une exception unique à travers les siècles? C'est mieux que cela, c'est l'alliance puissant de l'esprit créateur et de l'esprit traditionnel; c'est la rencontre féconde de la poésie des temps accomplis et de la poésie des âges nouveaux. Ayant devant les yeux les idoles du paganisme et les chastes statues des saints, l'image de l'ascétisme et de la volupté, Dante garda le sentiment de l'antiquité sans perdre le sentiment chrétien; il resta fidèle au passé, il comprit le présent, il demanda aux plus terribles dogmes de la religion le secret de l'avenir. Jamais le mot d'Aristote: "la poésie est plus vraie que l'histoire," ne s'est mieux vérifié que chez Dante; mais ce ne fut pas du monde extérieur du moyen âge que se saisit le génie inventif d'Alighieri; ce fut au contraire du monde

interne, du mond des idées. De là viennent la grandeur, les défauts aussi, de là la valeur immense, à quelque point de vue qu'on l'envisage, de ce livre où est semée à profusion une poésie éternellement jeune et brillante. L'intérêt philosophique vient encore ici s'ajouter à l'intérêt littéraire et historique. C'est la Bible, en effet, qui inspire Milton; c'est l'Évangile qui inspire Klopstock; dans *la Divine Comédie,* au contraire, c'est l'inconnu, ce sont les mystères de l'autre vie auxquels l'homme est initié. La question de l'immortalité est en jeu, et Dante a atteint la souveraine poésie.

La préoccupation, l'insistance de la critique sont donc légitimes: ce perpétuel retour vers le premier maitre de la culture italienne s'explique et se justifie. Jusqu'ici les apologistes n'ont pas manqué à l'écrivain: investigations biographiques, jugements littéraires, interprétations de toute sorte, hypothèses même pédantes ou futiles, tout semble véritablement épuisé. Peut-être n'y a-t-il pas grand mal: il s'agit d'un poëte, et si le vrai poëte gagne toujours à être lu, il perd souvent à être commenté. Un point curieux et moins exploré reste cependant, qui, si je ne m'abuse, demande à être particulièrement mis en lumière: je veux parler des antécédents de *la Divine Comédie.* Ce poëme, en effet, si original et si bizarre même qu'il semble, n'est pas une création subite, le sublime caprice d'un artiste divinement

doué. Il se rattache au contraire à tout un cycle antérieur, à une pensée permanente qu'on voit se reproduire périodiquement dans les âges précédents; pensée informe d'abord, qui se dégage peu à peu, qui s'essaye diversement à travers les siècles, jusqu'à ce qu'un grand homme s'en empare et la fixe définitivement dans un chef-d'œuvre.

Voyez la puissance du génie! Le monde oublie pour lui ses habitudes; d'ordinaire la noblesse se reçoit des pères; ici, au contraire, elle est ascendante. L'histoire recueille avec empressement le nom de je ne sais quel croisé obscur, parce qu'à lui remonte la famille de Dante; la critique analyse des légendes oubliées, parce que ces légendes sont la source première de *la Divine Comédie*. La foule ne connaîtra, n'acceptera que le nom du poëte, et la foule aura raison. C'est la destinée des hommes supérieurs de jeter ainsi l'ombre sur ce qui est derrière eux, et de ne briller que par euxmêmes. Mais pourquoi ne remonterions-nous point aux origines, pourquoi ne rétablirions-nous pas la généalogie intellectuelle des éminents écrivains? Aristocratie peu dangereuse, et qui n'a chance de choquer personne dans ce temps d'égalité.

Ce serait une folie de soutenir que Dante lut tous les visionnaires qui l'avaient précédé. Chez lui, heureusement, le poëte effaçait l'érudit. Cependant, comme l'a dit un écrivain digne de

sentir mieux que personne le génie synthétique de Dante, "il n'y a que la rhétorique qui puisse jamais supposer que le plan d'un grand ouvrage appartient à qui l'exécute." Ce mot explique précisément ce qui est arrivé à l'auteur de *la Divine Comédie.* Dante a résumé avec puissance une donnée philosophique et littéraire qui avait cours de son temps; il a donné sa formule définitive à une poésie flottante et dispersée autour de lui, avant lui. Il en est de ces sortes de legs poétiques comme d'un patrimoine dont on hérite: sait-on seulement d'où il vient, comment il s'est formé, à qui il appartenait avant d'être au possesseur d'hier? . . .

Quand je disais tout à l'heure que Dante vint tard, il ne faudrait pas entendre qu'il vint trop tard; l'heure de pareils hommes est désignée; seulement il arriva le dernier, il ferma la marche, pour ainsi dire. D'ailleurs, quoique la société religieuse d'alors commençât à être ébranlée dans ses fondements par le sourd et lent effort du doute, elle avait encore gardé intact l'héritage de la foi. La forme rigoureuse de la vieille constitution ecclésiastique demeurait sans échecs apparents, et l'on était encore à deux siècles de la Réforme; la papauté, en abusant des indulgences, n'apaisait pas les scrupules des consciences chrétiennes sur les châtiments de l'enfer.

Mais quel fut le résultat immédiat du relâchement qui commençait à se manifester çà et là

dans les croyances? C'est que les prédicateurs, pour parer à ce danger, évoquèrent plus qu'auparavant les idées de vengeance, et redemandèrent à la mort ces enseignements que leur permanence même rend plus terribles. De là, ces terreurs profondes de la fin de l'homme, ces inquiétudes, ces ébranlements en quelque sorte qu'on retrouve dans beaucoup d'imaginations d'alors, et qui furent si favorables à l'excitation du génie de Dante. Les anciens figuraient volontiers la mort sous des formes aimables; dans les temps qui avoisinent l'Alighieri, on en fait, au contraire, des images repoussantes. Ce n'est plus cette maigre jeune femme des premiers temps du christianisme; c'est plus que jamais un hideux squelette, le squelette prochain des danses macabres. Le symptôme est significatif.

De quelque côté qu'il jetât les yeux autour de lui, Dante voyait cette figure de la Mort qui lui montrait de son doigt décharné les mystérieux pays qu'il lui était enjoint de visiter. Je ne crois pas exagérer en affirmant que Dante a beaucoup emprunté aussi aux divers monuments des arts plastiques. Les légendes infernales, les visions célestes, avaient été traduites sur la pierre et avaient trouvé chez les artistes du moyen âge d'ardents commentateurs. Les peintures sur mur ont disparu presque toutes; il n'en reste que des lambeaux. Ainsi, dans la crypte de la cathédrale d'Auxerre, on voit un fragment où est figuré le

triomphe du Christ, tel précisément qu'Alighieri l'a représenté dans *le Purgatoire*. Les peintures sur verre où se retrouvent l'enfer et le paradis abondent dans nos cathédrales, et la plupart datent de la fin du douzième siècle et du courant du treizième. Dante avait du encore en voir exécuter plus d'une dans sa jeunesse. Entre les plus curieuses, on peut citer la rose occidentale de l'église de Chartres. Quant aux sculptures, elles sont également très-multipliées: le tympan du portail occidental d'Autun, celui du grand portail de Conques, le portail de Moissac, offrent, par exemple, des détails très-bizarres et très-divers. Toutes les formes du châtiment s'y trouvent pour ainsi dire épuisées, de même que dans *l'Enfer* du poëte; les récompenses aussi, comme dans *le Paradis,* sont très-nombreuses, mais beaucoup moins variées. Est-ce parce que notre incomplète nature est plus faite pour sentir le mal que le bien? Lorsque Dante fit son voyage de France, tout cela existait, même le portail occidental de Notre-Dame de Paris, où sont figurés plusieurs degrés de peines et de rémunérations. Sans sortir de nos frontières, notre infatigable archéologue M. Didron a pu compter plus de cinquante *illustrations de la Divine Comédie,* toutes antérieures au poëme. Évidemment Alighieri s'est inspiré de ce vivant spectacle. Les artistes ont donc leur part, à côté des légendaires, dans ces antécédents de l'épopée chrétienne, tandis que Dante lui-

même, par un glorieux retour, semble avoir été présent à la pensée de celui qui peignit *le Jugement dernier.* Noble et touchante solidarité des arts! Qui n'aimerait à lire une page de *la Divine Comédie* devant les fresques de la chapelle Sixtime? Qui n'aimerait à reconnaître dans Michel-Ange le seul commentateur légitime de Dante? A une certaine hauteur, tout ce qui est beau et vrai se rejoint et se confond. . . .

La question des épopées, si vivement et si fréquemment débattue par la critique moderne, ne peut-elle pas recevoir quelque profit du tableau que nous avons vu se dérouler sous nos yeux? On sait maintenant, par un exemple considérable, (quel est le nom à côté duquel ne pourrait être cité celui de Dante?) on sait comment derrière chaque grand poëte primitif il y a des générations oubliées, pour ainsi dire, qui ont préludé aux mêmes harmonies, qui ont préparé le concert. Ces œuvres capitales, qui apparaissent çà et là aux heures solennelles et chez les nations privilégiées, sont comme ces moissons des champs de bataille qui croissent fécondées par les morts. Dante explique Homère. Au lieu de l'inspiration religieuse mettez l'inspiration nationale, et vous saurez comment s'est faite *l'Iliade;* seulement la trace des rapsodes a disparu, tandis que celle des légendaires est encore accessible à l'érudition. Ces deux poëtes ont eu en quelque sorte pour soutiens les temps qui les ont précédés

et leur siècle même; l'un a redit ce que les Grecs pensaient de la vie publique, l'autre ce que les hommes du moyen âge pensaient de la vie future. Sont-ils moins grands pour cela? Cette collaboration de la foule, au contraire, est un privilége qui ne s'accorde qu'à de bien rares intervalles et à des génies tout à fait exceptionnels. Pour s'emparer à leur profit de l'inspiration générale, pour être les interprètes des sentiments et des passions d'une grande époque, pour faire ainsi de la littérature qui devienne de l'histoire, les poëtes doivent être marqués au front. Les pensées des temps antérieurs éclatent tout à coup en eux et s'y résolvent avec une fécondité et une puissance inconnues. A eux de dire sous une forme meilleure, souveraine, à eux de fixer sous l'éternelle poésie ce qui se répète à l'entour!

Ce spectacle a sa moralité: n'y a-t-il pas là, en effet, en dehors des noms propres, quelque chose de vraiment grandiose par la simplicité même? Dans l'ordre esthétique, la poésie est la première de toutes les puissances données à l'homme. Elle est à l'éternel beau ce qu'est la vertu à l'éternel bien, ce qu'est la sagesse à l'éternel vrai, c'est-à-dire un rayon échappé d'en haut; elle nous rapproche de Dieu. Eh bien! Dieu, qui partout est le dispensateur du génie, et qui l'aime, n'a pas voulu que les faibles, que les petits fussent tout à fait déshérités de ce don sublime. Aussi, dans ces grandes œuvres poétiques qui ouvrent les ères

littéraires, toute une foule anonyme semble avoir sa part. C'est pour ces inconnus, éclaireurs prédestinés à l'oubli, qu'est la plus rude tâche; ils tracent instinctivement les voies à une sorte de conquérant au profit de qui ils n'auront qu'à abdiquer un jour; ils préparent à grand'-peine le métal qui sera marqué plus tard à une autre et définitive empreinte; car, une fois les tentatives épuisées, arrive l'homme de génie. Aussitôt il s'empare de tous ces éléments dispersés et leur imprime cette unité imposante qui équivaut à la création. Et alors, qu'on me passe l'expression, on ne distingue plus rien dans ce faisceau, naguère épars, maintenant relié avec tant de puissance, dans cet imposant faisceau du dictateur poétique, qu'il s'appelle Homère ou Dante. Il y a donc là une loi de l'histoire littéraire qui rend un peu à tous, qui prête quelque chose à l'humanité, qui donne leur part aux humbles, et cela sans rien ôter au poëte; car, je le répète, les plus grands hommes évidemment sont seuls appelés ainsi à formuler une pensée collective, à concentrer, à absorber, à ranger sous la discipline de leur génie tout ce qui s'est produit d'idées autour d'eux, avant eux. C'est le miroir d'Archimède. . . .

Il y a donc deux parts à faire dans *la Divine Comédie,* sinon pour le lecteur, au moins pour le critique: la part de l'imitation, la part de la création. Dante est un génie double,

à la fois éclectique et original. Il ne veut pas imposer au monde sa fantaisie et son rêve par le seul despotisme du génie. Loin de là, il va au-devant de son temps, tout en attirant son temps à lui. C'est ainsi que font les grands hommes: ils s'emparent sans dédain des forces d'alentour et y ajoutent la leur.

Dirai-je ce que Dante a imité, ou plutôt ce qu'il a conquis sur les autres, ce qu'il a incorporé à son œuvre? Il faudrait en rechercher les traces partout, dans la forme, dans le fond, dans la langue même de son admirable livre. L'antiquité s'y trahirait vite: Platon par ses idéales théories, Virgile par la mélopée de ses vers. Le moyen âge, à son tour, s'y rencontrerait en entier: mystiques élans de la foi, rêveries chevaleresques, violences théologiques, féodales, municipales, tout jusqu'aux bouffonneries; c'est un tableau complet de l'époque: le génie disputeur de la scolastique y donne la main à la muse étrange des légendaires. Si la chevalerie introduit dans les mœurs le dévouement à la femme, si les troubadours abdiquent leur cynisme pour chanter une héroïne imaginaire, si Gauthier de Coinsy et les pieux trouvères redoublent le lis virginal sur le front de Marie, si les sculpteurs enfin taillent ces chastes et sveltes statues dont les yeux sont baissés, dont les mains sont jointes, dont les traits respirent je ne sais quelle angélique candeur, ce sont autant de modèles pour Dante, qui concentre

ces traits épars, les idéalise, et les réunit dans l'adorable création de Béatrice. Cet habile et souverain éclectisme, Alighieri le poursuit dans les plus petits détails. Ainsi, par un admirable procédé d'élimination et de choix, son rhythme il l'emprunte aux cantilènes des Provençaux; sa langue splendide, cette langue *aulique* et *cardinalesque,* comme il l'appelle, il la prend à tous les patois italiens, qu'il émonde et qu'il transforme. On dirait même qu'il sut mettre à profit jusqu'à ses liaisons, jusqu'aux amitiés de sa jeunesse. Au musicien Casella ne pu til pas demander ces harmonieuses douceurs de la langue toscane dont hérita plus tard Pétrarque; au peintre Giotto, le modèle de ces figures pensives dont le pinceau toucha à peine les lignes suaves, et qui, dans les vieilles œuvres italiennes, se détachent au milieu d'une lumière d'or; à l'architecte Arnolfo enfin, la hardiesse de ses belles constructions, pour bâtir aussi son édifice, sa sombre tour féodale maintenant noircie par les années, mais qui domine tout l'art du moyen âge.

Ainsi Dante ne dédaigne rien: philosophe, poëte, philologue, il prend de toutes mains, il imite humblement l'abeille. Vous voyez bien qu'il n'a rien créé, ou plutôt il a tout créé. C'est de la sorte que procèdent les inventeurs: chacun sait les éléments dont ils se servent, personne ne sait le secret de leur mise en œuvre. Ce qui d'ailleurs appartient en propre à Dante, ce qui

suffirait à sa gloire, c'est le génie; l'imposante grandeur de l'ensemble et en même temps la suprême beauté du détail et du style, ce je ne sais quoi qui est propre à sa phrase, cette allure souveraine et inexprimable de sa poésie, tant d'énergie à la fois et tant de grâce, tant de sobriété sévère dans la forme, et cependant tout un écrin éblouissant, des couleurs diaprées et fuyantes, et comme un rayonnement divin dans chaque vers.

Ce n'est pas qu'il faille porter le culte jusqu'à la superstition. Les *ultras,* il est vrai, sont moins dangereux en littérature qu'en politique: en politique, ils perdent les gouvernements qu'ils flattent; en littérature, ils ne font que compromettre un instant les écrivains qu'ils exaltent, et qui, après tout, sont toujours sûrs de retrouver leur vrai niveau. Mais pourquoi ces exagérations? Comment la vogue a-t-elle osé toucher à l'austère génie de Dante? L'œuvre d'Alighieri, j'en veux convenir, ressemble à ces immenses cathédrales du moyen âge que j'admire beaucoup, autant que personne, mais qui, en définitive, sont le produit d'un temps à demi barbare, et où toutes les hardiesses élancées de l'architecture, où les merveilles ciselées et les délicatesses sculpturales s'entremêlent souvent, à travers les époques, à de lourds massifs, à des statues difformes, à des parties inachevées. Apprécions Dante en critiques, et sachons où vont nos adhésions. Sans doute il y a sympathie permanente en nous pour ce passé

que chante le poëte; mais nous sentons bien que c'est du passé. Soyons francs: la fibre érudite est ici en jeu aussi bien que la fibre poétique; la curiosité est éveillée en même temps que l'admiration. Si l'on est frappé de ces catacombes gigantesques, on sait qu'elles sont lasile de la mort. En un mot, nous comprenons, nous expliquons, nous ne croyons plus. La foi de Dante nous paraît touchante, aux heures de tristesse, elle nous fait même envie quelquefois; mais personne ne prend plus au sérieux, dans l'ordre moral, le cadre d'Alighieri. N'est-ce pas pour nous un rêve bizarre qui a sa grandeur, sa grandeur en philosophie et en histoire? Et à qui, je la demande, cette lecture laisse-t-elle une terreur sincère et mêlée de joie, comme au moyen âge? Hélas! ce qui nous frappe surtout dans *la Divine Comédie,* ce sont les beaux vers.

Heureusement la forme seule a vieilli; le problème au fond est demeuré le même, et la poétique solution tentée par l'Alighieri reste immortelle. Les sentiments qu'il a touchés avec tant d'art, les vérités qu'il a revêtues de parures si splendides, sont de tous les temps. Convenons seulement que dans cette forêt où s'égare le poëte, on rencontre bien des aspects sauvages, bien des rochers inabordables. Dante, génie capricieux et subtil, est, ne l'oublions pas, un homme du moyen âge; incomparablement supérieur à son temps, il en a cependant çà et là les inégalités, le

tour bizarre, la barbarie, le pédantisme: légitime satisfaction qu'il faut donner à la critique. Qu'importe après tout? S'il y a çà et là des broussailles pédantesques qui obstruent la voie et qui fatiguent, tout à côté, et comme au détour du buisson, on est sûr de retrouver les idées grandioses, les images éclatantes, et aussi cette simplicité naïve, ces grâces discrètes, qui n'interdisent pas la science amère de la vie. Laissons donc l'ombre descendre et couvrir les parties de l'œuvre de Dante d'où la poésie s'est de bonne heure retirée, et contemplons plutôt celles que l'éternelle aurore de la beauté semble rajeunir encore avec les siècles.

Cette forme, si longtemps populaire, si universellement répandue, de la vision, semble disparaître avec Alighieri, qui sort radieux du fatras des commentaires et des imitateurs. Après lui, qu'on me passe le mot, il n'y a plus de pèlerinage de Childe-Harold dans l'autre monde. Le poëte avait fait de la vision son inaliénable domaine; c'était une forme désormais arrêtée en lui, et qui ne devait pas avoir à subir d'épreuves nouvelles. Quelles avaient été pendant treize cents sans les craintes, les espérances de l'humanité sur la vie à venir: voilà le programme que s'était tracé Dante, et qu'il avait pour jamais rempli dans son poëme.

Sur la pente rapide qu'elles descendaient, comment les générations qui succédèrent à l'Alighieri

auraient-elles pris désormais un intérêt autre que l'intérêt poétique à ces questions du monde futur ainsi résolues par des visionnaires? Dante, il est bon de la rappeler encore, n'est pas un génie précurseur par les idées; il ne devance pas l'avenir, il résume le passé; son poëme est comme le dernier mot de la théologie du moyen âge. Cela est triste à dire peut-être, mais le cynique Boccace est bien plutôt l'homme de l'avenir que Dante. Dante parle à ceux qui croient, Boccace à ceux qui doutent. La Réforme est en germe dans *le Décaméron,* tandis que *la Divine Comédie* est le livre des générations qui avaient la foi. C'est qu'on marche vite dans ces siècles agités de la Renaissance. Prenez plutôt l'Italie, cette vieille reine du catholicisme; la France, cette fille aînée de l'Église; l'Espagne même, cette terre privilégiée de la foi, et interrogez-les. Qu'elles vous disent ce que font leurs écrivains des souvenirs de Dante et des révélations sur l'autre vie; qu'elles vous disent s'ils n'ont pas bien plutôt dans la mémoire le scepticisme goguenard des trouvères. Voici en effet que Folengo, un moine italien, donne brusquement un enfer burlesque pour dénoûment à sa célèbre macaronée de *Baldus,* et qu'il y laisse sans façon son héros, sous prétexte que les poëtes, ces menteurs par excellence, ont leur place marquée chez Satan, et qu'il n'a, lui, qu'à y rester. Voilà que Rabelais, à son tour, verse au hasard les grossières enluminures

de sa palette sur ce tableau où le vieux gibelin avait à l'avance mis les couleurs de Rembrandt. Le prosaïque enfer de Rabelais, c'est le monde renversé. Je me garderai de citer des exemples: qu'on se rappelle seulement qu'il ne sait que faire raccommoder des chausses à Alexandre le Grand, à ce conquérant qu'Alighieri avait plongé dans un fleuve de sang bouillant. C'est à ces trivialités que l'Italie et la France retombent avec Folengo et Rabelais. L'Espagne aussi, un peu plus tard, aura son tour; prenez patience. Laissez sainte Thérèse, ce grand génie mystique égaré au seizième siècle, laissez-la évoquer l'enfer dans ses songes, et rêver que deux murailles enflammées viennent à elle, qui finissent par l'étreindre dans un embrassement de feu; laissez la foi et la mode des *autos sacramentales* conserver encore quelque importance aux compositions religieuses. Déjà, quand Calderon met sur la scène la légende du *Purgatoire de saint Patrice,* il n'a plus, à beaucoup près, ces mâles accents de la chanson du *Romancero,* où étaient si énergiquement dépeints les châtiments que Dieu inflige en enfer aux mauvais rois. La transformation s'annonce: on touche aux railleries de Quevedo, à cette bouffonne composition des *Étables de Pluton,* par laquelle l'Espagne vint la dernière rejoindre les cyniques tableaux du *Baldus* et du *Pantagruel.*

Tels sont les successeurs de Dante, qui l'ont un instant fait descendre de ce trône de l'art chrétien,

où notre équitable admiration l'a si légitimement et à jamais replacé. Comment, en demeurant au degré où nous l'avons vu, l'homme de son époque, l'Alighieri a-t-il empreint à un si haut point son œuvre d'un sceau personnel et original? comment la création et l'imitation se sont-elles si bien fondues dans la spontanéité de l'art? Inexplicables mystères du talent! C'est dans ce développement simultané du génie individuel, d'une part, et du génie contemporain, de l'autre, qu'est la marque des esprits souverains. Voilà l'idéal que Dante a atteint; il ne faut lui disputer aucune des portions, même les moindres, de son œuvre: tout lui appartient par la double légitimité de la naissance et de la conquête. Il était créateur, et il s'est fait en même temps l'homme de la tradition, parce que la poésie ressemble à ces lumières qu'on se passait de main en main dans les jeux du stade, à ces torches des coureurs auxquelles Lucrèce compare si admirablement la vie. Le flambeau poétique ne s'éteint jamais: Dante l'a pris des mains de Virgile pour en éclairer le monde moderne.

Chaque époque a sa poésie qui lui est propre, et qui ne saurait être pourtant qu'une manière diverse d'envisager, sous ses formes variées, le problème de la destinée humaine; car nous sommes de ceux qui croient, avec Théodore Jouffroy, que toute poésie véritable, que toute grande poésie est là, que ce qui ne s'y rapporte point

n'en est que la vague apparence et le reflet. Cette blessure au flanc que l'humanité porte après elle, ce besoin toujours inassouvi qui est en nous et que la lyre doit célébrer; en un mot, tout ce qu'Eschyle pressentait dans le *Prométhée,* tout ce que Shakespeare a peint dans *Hamlet,* ce pourquoi dont Manfred demande la solution à l'univers, ce doute que Faust cherche à combler par la science, Werther par l'amour, don Juan par le mal, ce contraste de notre néant et de notre immortalité, toutes ces sources de l'éternelle poésie étaient ouvertes dans le cœur d'Alighieri. Lassé de la vie, dégoûté des hommes, Dante s'est mis au delà du tombeau pour les juger, pour châtier le vice, pour chanter l'hymne du bien, du vrai et du beau. C'est un de ces maîtres aimés qui sont sûrs de ne jamais mourir, car l'humanité, qui a coopéré à leur œuvre, reconnaîtra toujours en eux sa grandeur et sa misère.

CABALA

Stehelin, Rabbinical Literature, Vol. I. p. 156.

We shall now lay before the Reader some Account of the *Radix,* or First Elements, of the *Cabala.* The *Radix* of this mysterious Science is the *Hebrew*-Alphabet; which the *Cabalists* divide into Three Portions; annexing to each Portion a peculiar Province of the *Cabala.* These

Three Provinces of their Mysteries are referr'd, One to the *Angelic* World, or the several Orders of Angels or pure intellectual Beings in Heaven; Another to the *Starry* World; and the Third to the *Elementary* World; for after this Manner the *Cabalists* divide the Universe. The Letters from *Aleph* to *Fod,* inclusive, are Symbols, say they, of the Orders of Angels, stil'd, by their Sages, Incorporal Beings, and pure Intellects, free from all Matter, and flowing immediately from, or being the purest and most sublime Effect of, the Power of God. The Letters from *Caph* to *Tzade,* likewise inclusive, represent the Orders of the Heavens, or the Starry World; which the *Cabalists* place under the Influence or Government of the Angels; and sometimes call the World of *Rounds* or *Circles.* The remaining Letters, up to the Letter *Thau,* are referr'd to the Four Elements, or Prime Species of Matter, and to all their various Forms and Combinations; which Elements, say the *Cabalists,* have Influence or Dominion over Sense and Life; and are themselves under the Influence or Direction of the Angels and the Cœlestial Circles, or Starry World. The Radical Cabalistical References of each Letter in the *Hebrew*-Alphabet the *Cabalists* set forth in the following Manner.

I. The Letter *Aleph* (*Doctrine*) denotes, among the *Cabalists,* the Holy Name *Hu,* assign'd to the Inaccessible Light of the Divine

Being, who is signified by the Word *Ensuph,* i. e. *Infinite.* It is referr'd to the First *Sephiroth* or Number; call'd *Kether,* i. e. *Crown,* as being the Symbol of the most Sublime and perfect Beings; that is to say, those Angels which are upheld through the Prime Influence, or the Prime Favour, or Goodness of God, and are call'd *Hajoth hakodesch,* i. e. Holy Animals. By these the *Cabalists* mean the *Seraphims.*

II. The Letter *Beth* (*House*) denotes the Holy Name, *Ehie,* assign'd to the Wisdom of God; and signifying likewise a Being, from which all other Beings are deriv'd. It is referr'd to the Second *Sephira,* call'd *Chochma,* i. e. *Wisdom;* which is annex'd to the Order of Angels, call'd *Ophanim,* i. e. *Wheels,* which is the Order of *Cherubims;* who were deriv'd from the Power of God, through, and next after, the Intelligences above-mention'd; that is to say, the *Seraphims;* and, from them, descend (*influentially*) into the Terrestrial Beings.

III. *Gimel* (*Restoring,* or *Rewarding*) denotes the Holy Name *Asch,* signifying the *Fire of Love,* or the *Holy Spirit,* and is referr'd to the Third *Sephira* or Number, call'd *Binah,* i. e. *Prudence;* representing an Order of Angels, call'd *Aralim,* i. e. *Great, Valiant, Angels of Might;* who make up the Third Class of Intelligences, or intellectual Beings, flowing from the Divine Goodness; and who are illumin'd by the

Power of God, through the Second Class, or Order (i. e. *the Cherubims*) and descend therewith (*influentially*) to the lowermost Beings. The Angels of this Order are taken to be the same with the Angels which are call'd *Thrones.*

IV. *Daleth* (*a Gate*) denotes the Holy Name *Ell;* and is referr'd to the Fourth *Sephira* or Number, call'd *Chesed,* i. e. *Grace,* or *Mercy;* which is appropriated to the *Maschemalim,* an Order of Angels which is taken to be the same with That call'd *Dominions;* and which flows, from the Power of God, through the Third Order of Intelligences (i. e. *the Aralim*), and, with it, descends influentially on the Beings below.

V. *He* (*Behold*) denotes the Holy Name *Elohim,* and the Fifth *Sephira,* call'd *Pashad;* which denotes *Severity, Judgment, Awe, the Left Side,* or *the Sword of God.* This *Sephira* is assign'd by some *Hebrews,* to the *Seraphims;* but by others, more reasonably, to the Order of Angels call'd *Gnaz* (*Strength*) which flows from the Power of God, through the Fourth Class of Intelligences, and, with it, sends down its Influence to Inferiour Beings.

VI. *Vau* (*a Hook*) denotes the Mysteries of the Holy Name *Eloah;* and is referr'd to the Fifth *Sephira,* which is call'd *Tiphereth,* denoting *Beauty, Ornament,* and the *Upper Cœlestial Sun;* and representing the *Melachim,* or Order of Angels call'd *Powers;* which are derived from

the Power of God, through the Fifth Order of Intelligences, and send, with that Order, their Influence down to Inferiour Creatures.

VII. *Sajin* (*Armeur*) denotes the Name *Zebaoth,* i. e. *the God of Hosts;* and the Seventh *Sephira,* call'd *Netsach,* i. e. *Conquering,* answering to the Order of Angels call'd *Elohim,* or *Principalities,* which flow from the Power of God, through the Angels of the Sixth Order, and, with them, send their Influences down upon the Inferiour Creation.

VIII. *Heth* denotes the Name of God, *Elohe Zebaoth,* and the Eighth *Sephira,* call'd *Tehilim,* i. e. *Praise,* and appropriated to the Angels *Benelohim,* or the *Sons of God;* the same with the Arch-Angels. And these flow from the Power of God, through the Angels of the Seventh Order; and descend, with them, influentially on Inferiour Beings.

IX. *Teth* (*Departing,* or *Escaping*) denotes the Name of God, *Sadai,* and the Ninth *Sephira,* call'd *Musad,* i. e. *Ground* or *Foundation;* and answering to the *Cherubims;* which flow from the Power of God, through the Angels of the Eighth Order; and send, in Conjunction with them, their Influence down on the Creation beneath them.

X. *Jod* (*Beginning*) denotes the Name of God, *Adonai Melech,* i. e. *The Lord is King;* and is referr'd to the Tenth *Sephira,* call'd *Mal-*

cut, i. e. *Kingdom;* and likewise *Ischim,* i. e. *Strong Men;* and is appropriated to the lowest of the Holy Orders (*the Orders of Angels*); which Order is illumin'd by the Power of God, through the Ninth Order, and, with the Power of that Order, descends influentially on the Sense and Knowledge of Men, referr'd to Things uncommon. Such are the References of this Part of the *Hebrew*-Alphabet to the several Orders in the Angelic World. We now proceed to the Alphabetical References to the World of Rounds or Circles, or the Starry World.

XI. *Caph,* Initial (*the Palm or Hollow of the Hand*) denotes the *Escadai,* i. e. the *Primum Mobile,* or First Mover; which is put in Motion immediately by the First Cause. The Intelligence of this First Mover is stiled *Metraton Seraphanim,* or *the Prince of Countenance.* 'Tis the Prime, Regular Mover, or Influencer of the Sensible World; flowing, through the Power of God, into all Things that have Motion, and endowing all the Lower Creation, by penetrating deep into the Forms thereof, with Life.

XII. *Caph,* Final, denotes the Circle of the Fixed Stars; that is to say, Those which make up the Signs of the Zodiac, call'd, by the *Hebrews, Galgal Hammaziloth,* i. e. *The Circle of Signs,* This Circle hath for its Intelligence the Angel *Raziel, Adam's* Instructer or Familiar Spirit; and its Influence is, through the Power of God,

by Means of the abovemention'd Intelligence, the Angel *Metraton,* diffus'd through the Lower Creation.

XIII. *Lamed* denotes the Heaven or Circle of *Saturn,* the First and Principal Circle of the Planets, or Erratic Stars. *Saturn,* the *Hebrews* call *Schebtai,* and his Intelligence, *Schebtaiel;* infus'd by the Power of God, and descending, by Means of the Intelligence *Raziel,* influentially upon Lower Beings.

XIV. *Mem,* Initial, denotes the Heaven or Circle of *Jupiter,* call'd, by the *Hebrews, Tsedeck;* the Intelligence of which is Tsadkiel, the Protecting Angel, or Familiar Spirit, of *Abraham;* diffus'd through the Power of God, by Means of the Intelligence *Schebtaiel,* throughout the Lower Creation.

XV. *Mem,* Final, denotes the Heaven of *Mars,* call'd, by the *Cabalists, Maadaim.* His Intelligence is *Camaël;* so call'd from the Heat of *Mars.* And this Intelligence flows, in the same Course and through the same Power with the Intelligences above-mention'd, influentially upon all Things beneath it.

XVI. *Nun,* Initial, denotes the Heaven of the *Sun,* call'd, by the *Hebrews, Schemsch.* His Intelligence is the Angel *Raphaël,* the Instructer of *Isaac;* flowing through the Power of God, by Means of the Intelligence *Camaël,* upon all Things below.

XVII. *Nun,* Final, denotes the Circle of *Venus* call'd, by the *Hebrews, Nogu.* Her Intelligence is *Haniel,* i. e. *Reconciler of Mercy;* infus'd by the Power of God, through the Intelligence *Raphaël,* and diffus'd, by the same Means, upon all Terrestrial Beings.

XVIII. *Samech* denotes the Heaven of *Mercury,* call'd *Cochab,* i. e. *Star.* His Intelligence is *Michael,* derived from the Power of God, by Means of the Intelligence *Raphaël;* and, by Means of the same Intelligence, descending influentially upon all Things below.

XIX. *Hajim* denotes the Heaven of the *Moon,* call'd *Jareach, The Left Eye of the World.* Her Intelligence is *Gabriel,* infus'd by the Power of God, through the Intelligence *Michael;* and descending, as the 'forementionʼd, influentially upon all the Terrestrial Creation. Such is the Cabalistical Account of the References of these Letters of the *Hebrew*-Alphabet to the World of Circles or Stars. And to these may be added the References of the Three Letters following.

XX. *Pe,* Initial, denotes the Reasonable Soul; which, in the Opinion of the *Hebrews,* is govern'd by various Intelligences.

XXI. *Pe,* Final, denotes all Spirits of the Animal Nature: which, through the Power and Command of God, are govern'd, or influenc'd, by the Intelligences above.

XXII. *Tzade,* Initial, is referr'd to the Intelligible cœlestial Matter, and to the sensible Elements, or the Elements of Sense, in all compound or mixt Bodies; which Matter and Elements are, through the Power of God, govern'd by different Intelligences, according to their different Natures and Forms.

We now come to the Alphabetical References the Cabalists make to their Elementary World.

XXIII. *Tzade,* Final, is referr'd to the Four Elements of Matter; namely, Fire, Air, Water, and Earth; which are govern'd, through the Power of God, by certain cœlestial Powers and Angels; as is the *Prima Materia,* or First Matter, which is the grand Fountain or Origin of all the Elements.

XXIV. *Koph* is referr'd to inanimate or insensitive Bodies; as Minerals, &c. whether simple or compound. These Bodies are, through the Power of God, governed by the Cœlestial Beings, and their respective Intelligences.

XXV. *Resch* is referr'd to all the Productions in the Vegetable World; as Trees, Herbs, Roots, &c. and to the Cœlestial Influences that are derived upon them. There is not, say the Cabalists, an Herb upon Earth that hath not its Intelligence, or Influence, which saith to it, Encrease and multiply thy self.

XXVI. *Schin* is referr'd to all the Species of the Animal Nature; as Quadrupeds, Birds, Fish,

and Insects, and every Thing, beneath the Rational Nature, that hath Life and Motion. These receive, through the Power of God, the Influences of the Cœlestial Bodies, and of their respective Intelligences.

XXVII. *Thau* is the Symbol of the little World, Man; because as Man, with respect to this World, was the Being created last, so is this Letter the last of the *Hebrew*-Alphabet. He is govern'd of God, through the Qualities of the *First Matter,* and according to the Influences of the Stars, and likewise by Guardian-Angels, which attend him, and which, in *Hebrew,* are call'd *Ischim,* i. e. *Strong Men;* who are said to have been the Last of the Angelic Creation, as Man was the Last of This.

Such are the References of the Letters of the *Hebrew*-Alphabet, towards the Accomplishment of the Mysteries of the *Cabala,* extracted, not without great Labour, from the Writings of Rabbi *Akkìva,* who was, it seems, a most profound Cabalist, and who hath been already frequently mention'd in the Course of these Papers. They pass, from God, down to all the Stages of the known Creation; the Letter *Aleph,* the First in the *Hebrew*-Alphabet, being referr'd to God, who is the First Cause of all Things, and who, through his unsearchable Power and Judgment, comprehends, directs and governs all Things; working by and diffusing his Power

upon, Second Causes; and, from them, deriving his Power upon Third Causes, &c. Which Causes are the Sacred Hosts and Principalities; who have their different Degrees of Influence; rising gradually, one Class above another, to different Stages of Power and Perfection.

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